



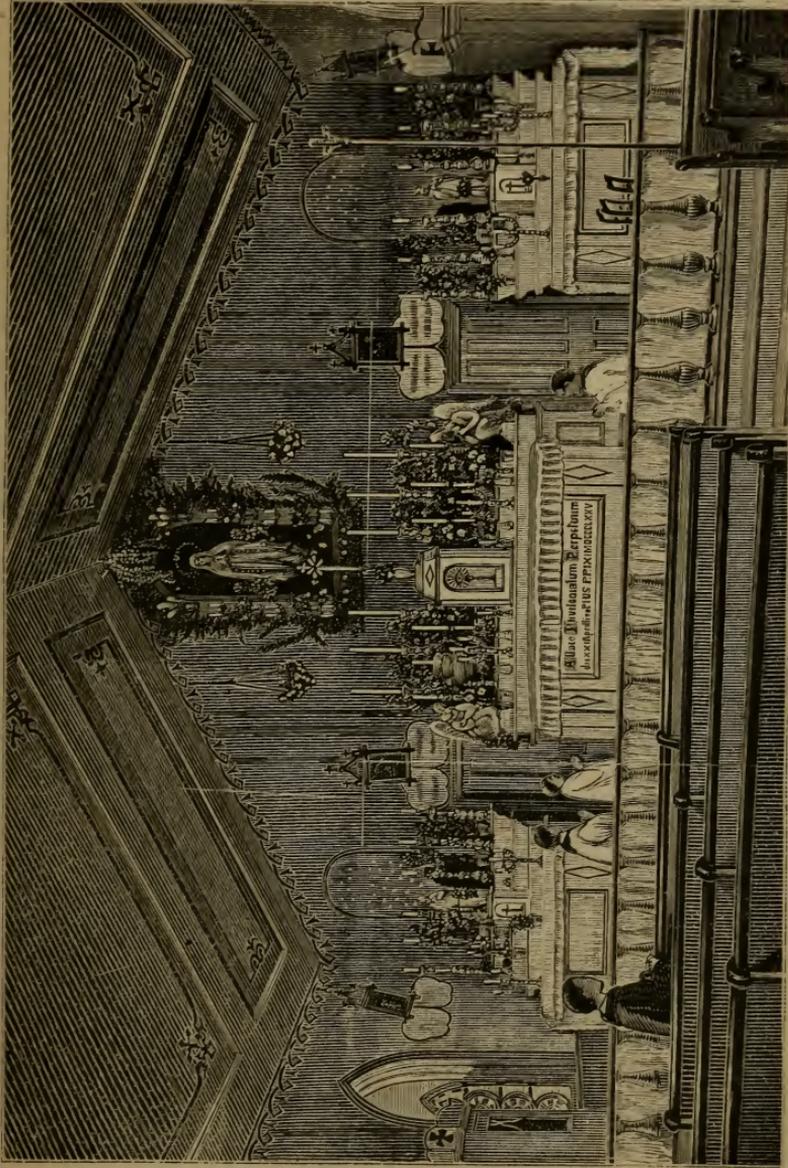
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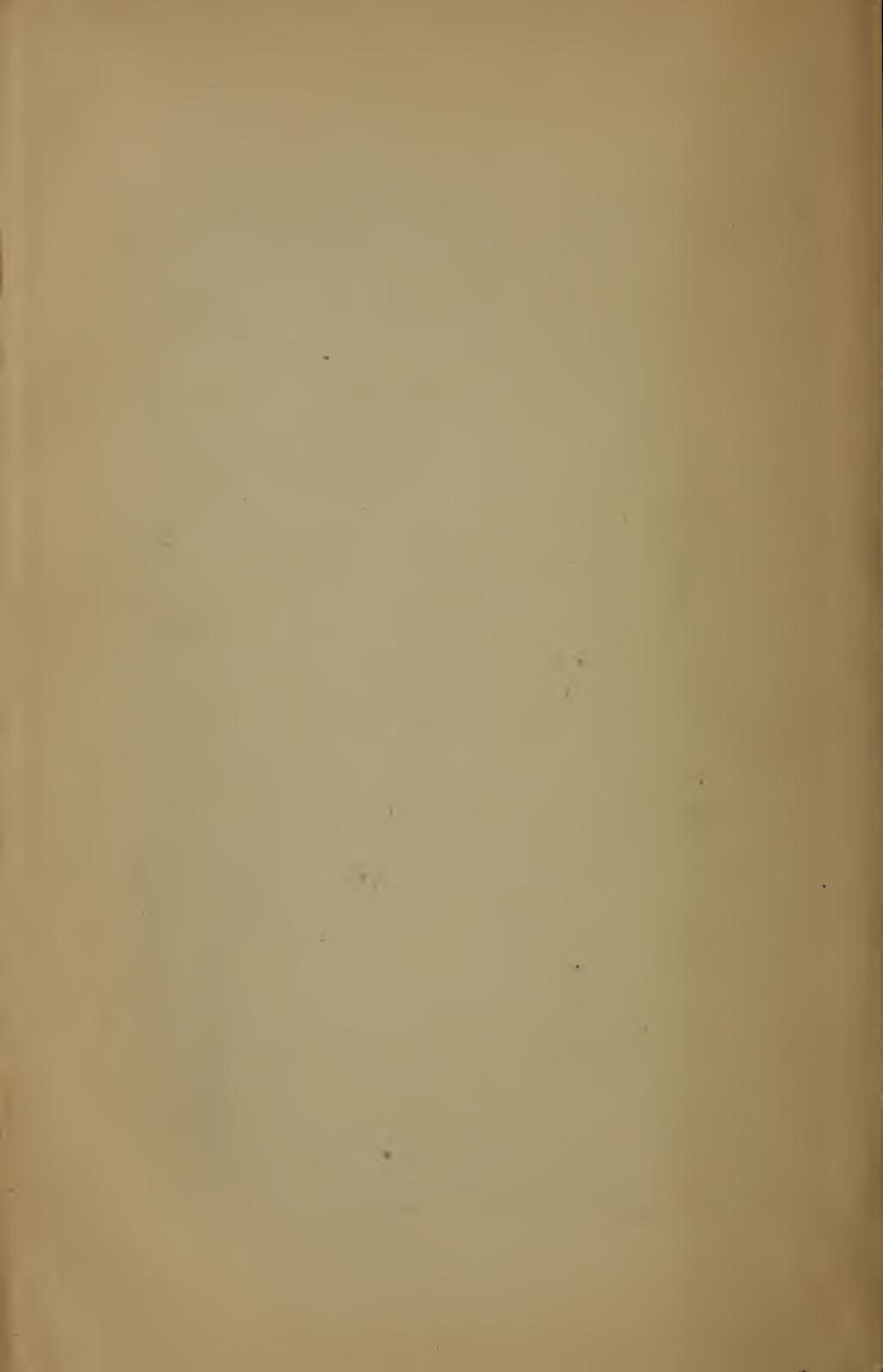
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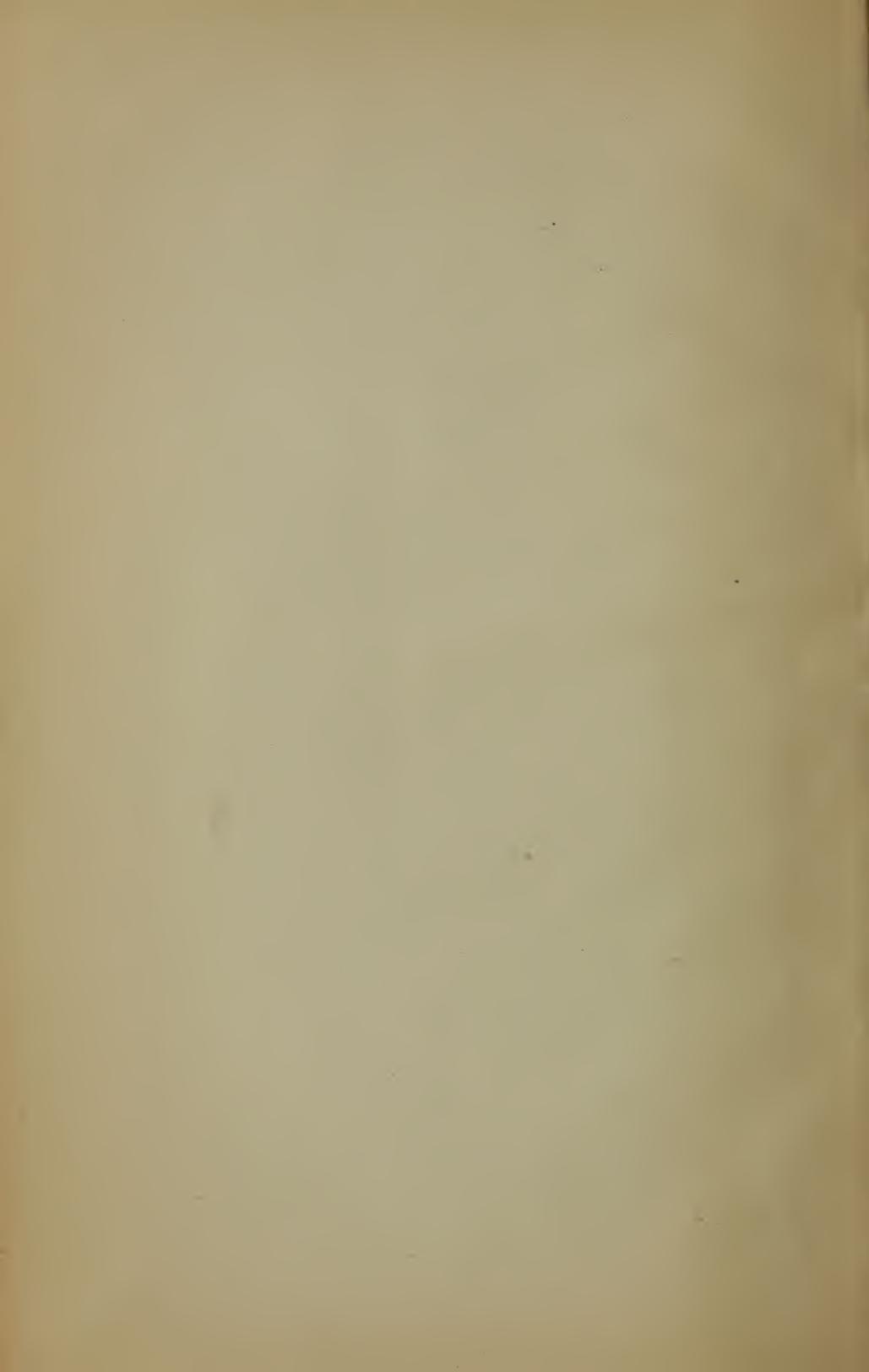
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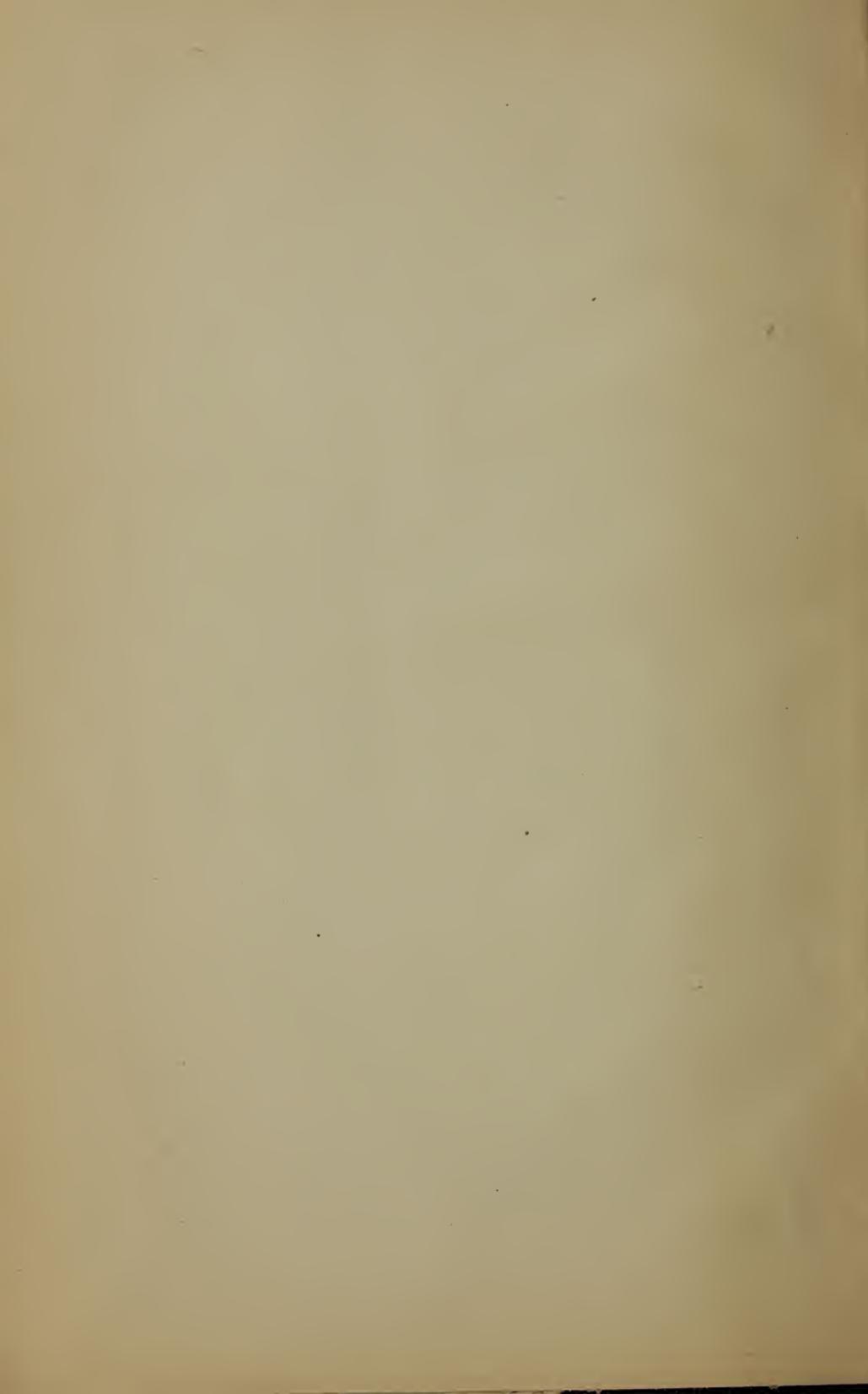
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA.



Altar of our Lady of Lourdes, Trenton, N. J.







The Immaculate Conception:

THE HISTORY, TRIALS, AND TRIUMPHS
OF THE WORK OF GOD AT LOURDES.

BY

THE REV. HILARY MAURICE VIGO,

PASTOR OF ST. JULIA'S, TURIN, AND FORMERLY PROFESSOR OF
PHILOSOPHY IN THE SEMINARY.

TRANSLATED FROM THE ITALIAN

UNDER THE SUPERVISION OF THE

FRANCISCAN FATHERS, TRENTON, NEW JERSEY.

"Oh Lord, thy work, in the midst of the years bring it to life." HABAC. III. 1.

TRENTON. N. J.

1878.



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WASHINGTON

TO MY DEAR CHILDREN,

THE PARISHIONERS OF THE CHURCH OF ST. JULIA, V.M.

DEARLY BELOVED :

To you, who for the past ten years, have been the object of my thoughts, my affections and solitudes, I dedicate this work, the fruit of my meditations during my journey to the holy Sanctuary of the Immaculate Virgin Mary at Lourdes, towards the close of June, 1876.

The subjects I propose to treat of in this work, you are already, in great measure, acquainted with by reason of the lectures I delivered before you during the month of May. I now present you with the subject-matter of these discourses in the more lasting form of a book.

I entreat you, my friends, to read this little work through, and to meditate on the lessons it inculcates in order to derive therefrom spiritual profit. May you learn from the perusal of its pages to love, after God, our most holy Mother, the Immaculate Virgin Mary, whose powerful intercession forget not to invoke for yourselves, and for me, too, your most affectionate pastor,

HILARY MAURICE VIGO,

ST. JULIA'S, TURIN,

November 27th, 1876.

TO THE READER.

Having made, about the commencement of last March, a novena in honor of the Immaculate Virgin of Lourdes, and having drank two drops of the water of the fountain which welled up miraculously at the feet of Bernadette, in the grotto of Massabielle, I became the recipient of a very singular temporal blessing. I then resolved to compile a series of lectures and meditations to be delivered before the people during the month of Mary, and during the novena preceding the feast of the Immaculate Conception, the subject-matter of which would be a narrative of the apparitions of the Blessed Virgin at Lourdes. I, therefore, availed myself of all the books I could find upon the subject, especially the imperishable work of M. Henry Lasserre, entitled "*Notre Dame de Lourdes*," from which, without his permission—which, no doubt, he would willingly have accorded me—I have taken almost the whole of my book. As I have made these extracts on my own responsibility, it is but fair to acknowledge it.

Have I, by issuing this work, fulfilled my vow? I place my confidence in the goodness and clemency of the Immaculate Virgin Mary. I could, perhaps, have written more in accordance with the dignity of the subject, had I given myself to deep study by way of preparation, and afterwards corrected my production with a critic's judgment. But the desire to promote the honor of the Immaculate Virgin impelled me to unite all my powers in order to give the work to the people during the novena of the Immaculate Conception.

Deign, gentle reader, to pardon the defects of my work, and, with your fervor make amends for the spiritual coldness and poverty of the compiler.

TRANSLATOR'S PREFACE.

Several times during the church's history has it pleased God to manifest unto the world the power His Most Holy Mother wields at the throne of grace. Hence, we find many miracles performed by her power, and many graces obtained through her intercession; and these manifestations occur most frequently in some favored spot which is subsequently known as a *Shrine* or *Sanctuary*.

The latest sanctuary in which, in the incredible ways of God's providence, Mary has been pleased to manifest her maternal tenderness is the grotto of Lourdes. So much has been written about it, so many pilgrimages have been made to that hallowed spot, so many astounding miracles have been wrought there, that the name of Lourdes has become a household word in every Catholic family.

And if Lourdes is already so well known, what needs it of further notoriety? We answer, the subject is exhaustless. Lourdes will be the theme of many a graphic pen for ages, because of its connection with Mary, whose power and benignity have been so frequently manifested in that holy place. Nor will she cease to show herself a mother there. We may confidently expect to see many other instances of her maternal solicitude recorded. God's power is unbounded, and the well-spring of His graces ceaseless in its activity, and He will never refuse to show forth His power, and shower down His graces upon those who have got Mary for intercessor. Too much, then, cannot be written about Lourdes, the scene of so many heavenly benedictions in the past, and of so much promise in the future.

Such sentiments as these must have inspired our author to deliver this series of lectures, on the Madonna of Lourdes, before his devoted parishioners, and, subsequently, to issue them in book form.

Such sentiments, too, have urged the Franciscan Fathers to get

the work translated into English ; and, in having done so, they feel sure they have anticipated the wishes of the faithful subject to their charge, as well as of all good Catholics. They feel certain, too, that the work is very opportune, just now, in this locality. In the year 1874, as they were building their Convent in Chambersburg for the students of the order, some pious persons in the vicinity, suggested the idea of building a chapel to the Madonna of Lourdes. The Fathers appreciated the idea, and went to work accordingly. Within one year the chapel was completed, and was dedicated on the 25th of April, 1875, by the Rt. Rev. Dr. Corrigan, Bishop of Newark. A beautiful statue of the Madonna of Lourdes—a piece of French workmanship, was presented to the Fathers to be placed in the niche above the high altar. The Fathers having ever since experienced the protection of the Madonna of Lourdes, are, therefore, anxious to spread devotion to her under that title.

Regarding the merits or demerits of the translation we will be silent, leaving it to others to decide. But be they what they may, if our work gain the object for which it has been undertaken, we shall have been amply rewarded for our trouble.

In conclusion we earnestly commend its careful and frequent perusal. In addition to its being in the original a graphic account of the events that have taken place at Lourdes it also serves the purpose of a book of meditations. May it enkindle in those into whose hands it may fall, a lively devotion to the Immaculate Mother of God.

FRANCISCAN COLLEGE,

TRENTON, N. J.

September 8th, 1877.

THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION.

PART I.

THE HISTORY OF THE WORK OF GOD AT LOURDES.

CHAPTER I.

A sketch of the History and Topography of Lourdes.

“Happy is that people whose God is the Lord.” Psalm cxi. iii.

France is separated from Spain by a long and lofty range of mountains stretching westward from the Mediterranean to the shores of the Atlantic, and this is called the Pyrenean chain. These mountains give a name to three French provinces, or departments, as they are commonly called, namely, the department of the Oriental Pyrenees, whose capital is Perpignan; the department of the Low Pyrenees, whose capital is Pau; and the department of the High Pyrenees, whose capital is Tarbes. This last named department is situated about midway amidst the mountain chain; and while its second city is Argèles, the third is Lourdes, which is distant about twenty kilometres by rail from Tarbes, fifteen from Argèles, and thirty-nine from Pan.

The position of Lourdes is lovely and picturesque. Its southern extremity lies at the foot of the first spurs of the great mountain range, at the junction of the seven valleys, called the valleys of Lavedan, which penetrate

the mountains, and contain famous baths; and Lourdes is the key to these valleys. On the northern side, it is hemmed in by hills of gentle acclivity; and these terminate the plains of Tarbes and of Toulouse: hence, it lies on the cross-roads that lead to the famous baths. Whether one journeys to Barèges, to Saint Sauveur, to Cauterets, to Bagnères-de-Bigorre, or from Cauterets, or Pau to Louchou, he must always pass through Lourdes.

Lourdes is of very ancient origin. Founded, probably, by the ancient Spaniards, mention is made of it in the earliest histories of that country. It was known in the days of Charlamagne; and its name has been constantly recorded in the page of history from the days of that warrior king up to the epoch of the great French Revolution in 1789. An ancient castle, built like an eagle's nest upon a solitary cliff, at the foot of which, on the eastern side, the city reposes, adds to its celebrity. The houses, sufficiently neat, are built, almost without design, upon a variegated tract of country, and are grouped, as it were, in a disorderly manner along the base of the aforesaid cliff. These houses were formerly sufficient to accommodate a population of about five thousand, but the apparitions of the Virgin Immaculate have completely changed the appearance of the city, and converted it into an immense inn, by reason of the accommodation it had been called upon to afford the crowds of pilgrims, who flocked thither from every part of the world.

In order to meet these requirements new houses had to be built on different sites, and the old ones remodeled. And so the pilgrims can now find lodgings suitable to their tastes and means, as well as food and drink of

every description, public and private *dilligences*, and objects of piety for sale, particularly along the way leading to the holy grotto. In a word, from having been a city of modest proportions, Lourdes has, of late, wonderfully increased its dimensions, and is now destined to rank, and that at no far distant period, among the most flourishing cities of France.

The Mons. Bishop of Tarbes, in whose diocese Lourdes is situated, in his Homily delivered in the new sanctuary on the 11th of February, 1873, very appropriately said: "Good city of Lourdes; city of Mary. The Immaculate Virgin has brought thee beneath the folds of her mantle, all temporal and eternal blessings. Thou has found here the richness of the earth, and the pure dews of heaven. Our Lady of Lourdes is the rich treasure of this locality. All thy houses are homes for the pilgrims, and the repositories of emblems of devotion. You, my beloved flock, should be very grateful to God and to the Virgin Mary."

In the midst of all this splendor which renders the city of Lourdes illustrious, God wishes that the simplicity of its primitive customs should not fade away, and decrees to keep, through His Immaculate Mother, Christian faith and piety alive in the hearts of the fellow citizens of Bernadette.

I have said that God wishes to keep Christian faith and piety alive in the hearts of the inhabitants of Lourdes, because, in truth, they are a people of excellent character. Simple in manners, sweet of disposition, fervent in piety, and always engaged in works of a laborious character, which preclude all possibility of sinful indulgence, they are to our great cities a striking example of the beneficent influence which the Catholic religion,

when practiced in its native simplicity, wields over the masses. Their honesty is notorious; the integrity of their customs, most singular; their knowledge, generally advanced; mutual love reigns supreme amongst them; and the support they give each other in time of need is particularly remarkable, for it can be seen at every step in the numerous male and female associations existing in their midst, all dedicated to some special Saint, whose object is to guard their spiritual, much more than their temporal interests. Hence, it happens that the parish church is always crowded whenever a sermon is being preached, the Christian doctrine expounded, or any other holy function performed. And particularly noticeable is the deep devotion of the people to the Most Holy Virgin: suffice it to say, that every altar in their church is dedicated to her.

Amid the environs of Lourdes, here steep and wild like some site in the virgin forests of America, there tranquil and beautiful to look upon as the most lovely, verdant meadows, the valley of the Gave, which stretches along the western borders of the city, deserves special mention. This river, or rather mighty torrent, rises amid the Pyrenees, and being swollen along its course by many tributaries, flows in a southerly direction as far as Lourdes, where its waters foam and dash against the rock on which the castle stands, and then taking a rectangular sweep, hurries on to the city of Pau, where it blends with the waters of the Adour, which empties into the great ocean. This valley, viewed from the castle, presents a magnificent prospect. Before us—that is towards the west, is a garland of mountains; on the left mountains also bound our view; while on the right rises a picturesque little hill, along whose flank runs the road

to Pau, and now, also, the railroad. The banks of the river are a scene of enchantment. All along smiling meadows, fringed with rows of alders, ash-trees, and poplars, invite our gaze. Here, also, may be seen a beautiful little island formed by the river flowing on the right, and by a canal on the left. Some eighteen years ago this canal worked a mill. The island, which is not wide, but is about one kilometre in length, is called the island of Chalet, and terminates below towards Pau, where the canal reunites with the Gave.

At the confluence of the canal and the river, a little to the left of the latter, rises a steep rock of huge proportions. It is of a greyish color, and is tapestried with ivy and box, with heather and musk plants; while from its wide fissures bud forth here and there wild brushwood, brambles, wild roses, and hazels. The base of the rock slightly resembles an amphitheatre, for its two extremities are planted on the ground, and in its centre it remains suspended in the form of a circular arch at a height of about four metres in its greater altitude, of about twelve in its cord formed from the ground, and of about as many more in depth. Thus beneath it there is, as it were, a grotto or cavern, which from below united with the ground, rises and prolongs itself like a pedlar's tent, or half an arch of a misshapen oven. Above this grotto, at the right as one enters, opens a second cavity, excavated by the hand of nature to the depth of about two metres, shaped like a window or a niche of a church, presenting the figure of the letter O, but somewhat sharper, and communicating with the cavern beneath by an internal aperture, and with a third cavity half concealed by bushes, and facing the west, which serves to give light to the second niche. This last

named niche, the most important for our history, has got a wild rose bush growing at its base, which, springing from a fissure in the rock, flings out here its long branches

Up to the year 1858 no place within the environs of Lourdes was so little known and unfrequented as the locality in which this rock stands. Situated on a common, it was scarcely ever visited, except by a shepherd, or some fisherman who, happening to be near, had been overtaken by a storm. The rock was called *Massabielle*, which, in the dialect of the town, means *Old Rock*, and the cavern described above, was called the *Grotto*, or the *Grotto of Massabielle*.

Adorable providence of God! Admirable wisdom of Mary! Even here in this solitary niche, the Most August Queen of heaven vouchsafed to manifest herself eighteen times.

And now, devout reader, rest a little, and before going further make the following

MEDITATION.

I. Like the heavens, the earth, too, announces the glory of God, and of His Immaculate Mother, for whom the whole world was made, as St. Bernard writes. Wherefore, do the lofty Pyrenees and their low lying valleys, the rocks and the meadows, the grass and the flowers, the mighty rivers and the gentle rivulets, the plants that grow wild along the wayside, and those that receive the fostering care of the florist invite you, as you enter the environs of Lourdes, to honor, especially during the beautiful month of May, her, of whom the Scripture says: "She is exalted like a cedar on Libanus, and like a cypress on Mount Zion; her head is like

Carmel on which was shed the glory of Sharon, whose foundations are on the holy hills." Will you be deaf to so many invitations? Will you not resolve to honor the dearest and most beautiful of creatures?

II. Consider that the *true way* of honoring the Immaculate Virgin Mary is to practice our holy religion faithfully and from our hearts, like the people of Lourdes, by frequenting church, and by being present at the sacred functions, especially the sermons, by receiving the Sacraments often and with devotion, and by having your name enrolled in some one of the many pious confraternities instituted in her honor, in order thereby to conquer human respect, to give good example to your neighbors, and strengthen the beneficent influence of religion among them.

III. Consider that as God is not found in the *wind*, or in the *earthquake*, or in the *fire*, so neither is Mary. (III Kings, xix. 11). But she is found in the sighing of the gentle breeze, amid the solitude of the mountains, and in the depths of the lonely valleys—that is to say, she is found by those who withdraw from worldly pastimes, and meditate upon spiritual truths. Wherefore, if you wish to derive any benefit from her apparitions and holy inspirations, and to enjoy her beneficence, you must resolve to curb your passions, to keep your mind recollected, and guard the impulses of your heart and imagination. Like God, so too does Mary say of the soul: "I will lead her into the wilderness, and I will there speak to her heart." (Osee, ii. 14).

Act of Virtue.—Enrol yourself in the Society of the Madonna of Lourdes, and faithfully observe its regulations.

Ejaculation.—Help of Christians, pray for us!

CHAPTER II.

The Hidden Pearl.

“Having found one pearl of great price.” (Matt. xiii. 46).

Amongst the poor families of Lourdes there was one in the year 1858, consisting of the father, mother, and four children. The father, Francis Sonbirous, was a miller by profession. In times past he had rented a little mill; but soon he was forced to depart from his contract, because in Lourdes that kind of business is usually done on credit, and being unable to procure it from lack of funds, he soon became poorer than he was at first. In hopes of better days he hired a plain little house, which he endeavored to maintain by doing a day's work for anyone who might wish to employ him. But though poor in this world's goods, not owning even a little garden, he was rich in the possession of a good wife, whose name was Louisa Castèrot, a woman of good Christian habits, and most tenderly devoted to the welfare of her family.

The two youngest of the children were boys; the third, called Mary, was about eleven years old, and the eldest about fourteen. The last mentioned child, having been born while the mother was sick, could not be reared at home, and was, therefore, sent out to be nursed in a virtuous family who dwelt in a neighboring village called Bartrès, located higher up amid the Pyrenees. The nurse's pay which amounted to about five francs a month, was given sometimes in money, but generally in merchandise.

Meanwhile, the second daughter was born; and two babies to care for would have prevented the mother

from doing a day's work in the fields; wherefore, she was necessitated to leave the elder with the nurse even after having been weaned. When she had attained that age at which she could be useful to her parents, they wished to take her home; but the Bartrés family interposed; saying that they loved the little girl as one of their own children, and, therefore, undertook the responsibility of supporting her gratuitously, and gave her the office of shepherdess. She remained at this employment until she was fourteen years old, the time at which her parents took her home. But let us tarry yet longer, and more to the purpose, with this little girl who is the principal human personage of our history.

In baptism the little girl had been called Maria Bernarda, but agreeably to family usage, this name was subsequently changed to *Bernadette*, a diminutive employed by the French, and expressive of fondness.

While Bernadette remained with her adopted parents amid the Pyrenees, she passed her days, as we have said, in tending the flocks. Dwelling amid the solitary hills, far removed from the pestiferous influence of the world, and under the protection of God and His angels, she amused herself innocently along the mountain slopes, building little play-houses with the stones that lay scattered all around, toying with the grass and the flowers, listening to the gentle murmurings of the rivulets, and with fondness caressing her little pet lamb.

"Amongst my lambs," she said, "there is one I love above all the rest."

"And which one is it?" a person asked.

"It is the little one," she replied—and she loved to caress this little lamb, and in playing with it while away the hours.

Dear little girl! Like the poor lambkin she loved so much, she, too, was the weak little one among the girls. Although fourteen years old, she would pass for eleven, or twelve. Though not sickly, she was still subject to asthmatic attacks, which often gave her extreme trouble; but she bore her sufferings with patience and tranquil resignation. Was it the Grace of God that sustained her, or did her endurance spring from natural temperament? However it may be, it is certain, that having learned from her adoptive mother how to recite the Rosary, Bernadette was everywhere and every moment engaged in this devotion, whether by way of recommending herself to God, or through a native yearning of her innocent soul. She had learned nothing beside. She could neither read nor write; but she well knew the *Pater, Ave, Gloria Patri*, and *Credo*, which the French always repeat when reciting the Rosary. But though she had acquired no book learning, she had learned what is more pleasing to God, namely, innocence, simplicity, and purity of conscience; virtues which kept her soul white and spotless as when washed in the waters of Baptism. Up to this, as was natural, she had not been admitted to her first Communion; and in order to prepare her for it the more easily in the city, her parents, notwithstanding their poverty, took her home about the end of January, 1858.

Her mother, finding her in such feeble health, attended to her more diligently than to the other children, as all good mothers do. And so, while all the other members of the family went around with feet unprotected, save by a simple wooden shoe, Bernadette was compelled by her mother to wear stockings, and was in every other way under her continual surveillance.

What poverty! What misery was in that family which often wanted the common necessaries of life!

And still, my dear reader, it was to this poor, weak little girl, that Mary Immaculate vouchsafed to appear on eighteen occasions. Enter into yourself, and with mind and heart raised to God, make the following

MEDITATION.

I. What a difference there is between the judgments of men and those of God! Man judges of externals, but God penetrates the heart. To accomplish His designs, He selects the foolish ones to confound the wise, as St. Paul says: "*Quæ stulta sunt mundi elegit Deus ut confundat sapientes.*" (I. Cor. i. 27). Who, more *ignorant* than this poor little girl, who can neither read nor write, and who knows no language except her own mountain dialect. Still, we will see how she shall confound the wise ones of the world. And even as twelve unlettered fishermen made their voices echo through the universe, and converted it to Christianity, so does this illiterate girl cause the name of Mary to resound throughout Christendom. Are you one of those who think themselves wise and prudent, and capable of instructing everyone? Still worse, are you one of those, who, without the necessary fund of knowledge, wish to discuss and even define questions of religion, and go so far as to instruct the Bishop and the Vicar of Christ?

II. "*God selects the weak ones of the world to confound the strong,*" continues St. Paul. Whom can you find weaker than this young, asthmatic girl? And still, as you peruse the pages of this history, you will find her too strong to be conquered by threats and persecutions,

and too reliant on the Divine aid not to come out victorious in the trials through which, in the inscrutable decrees of Providence, she had subsequently to pass. Do you flatter yourself to be possessed of fortitude, and do you rashly expose yourself to danger, and fall into sin? Have you not seen, a thousand times, what enormous sins you have committed against faith, charity, and chastity, by reason of your pride and presumption?

III. *The base things of the world, things that are contemptible, and things that are of no account hath God chosen that He might bring to nought those who think themselves something.* Who more ignoble, in the world's estimation, than Bernadette? She is the daughter of a poor, laboring miller, who possesses nought of this world's goods; and was engaged in tending the flocks on the mountains. What worldling, on seeing her pass along clad in a coarse, woolen dress, all patched, with wooden shoes on her feet, and possessed of no natural charms to redeem the poorness of her raiment, would not have spurned her as a creature of no account? Still, God selects her to bring to nought those who think themselves something, because sprung of noble ancestry, and possessed of worldly riches. And what do you believe yourself to be? Are you not one of those who despise the poor? Do you not think yourself something great, because you are finely clothed and blessed with affluence?

Learn of St. Paul one grand truth, the foundation of all sanctity and perfection, namely, "that we should not be proud of what we possess, but should refer all the glory thereof to God." Learn, too, to attach importance to the judgment of God, not to the opinions of men,

Practice.—Seriously examine your conscience as to how you have sinned in thought, word, and deed, by pride, vain glory, and self-love.

Ejaculation.—Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost, as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.

CHAPTER III.

The Dove in the Cliffs of the Rock.

“My dove in the cliffs of the rock, in the hollow places of the wall, show me thy face; let thy voice sound in my ears; for thy voice is sweet, and thy face comely.” Cant. ii. 14.

The 11th of February, 1858, was a cold, bleak day in the vicinity of Lourdes. The sky was thickly curtained with clouds, which, undisturbed by the winds, let fall from time to time some drops of rain mixed with snow. It was the last Thursday of the Carnival, commonly called *giovedì grasso*, a day which foolish worldings usually spend in pagan pastimes and sensual enjoyments. The parish clock had already struck eleven, and while the rich and happy ones all around were preparing sumptuous dinners, the poor Soubirous family did not have firewood wherewith to cook their scanty meal.

“Go along the banks of the Gave, or across the common, in search of wood,” said the mother to her second daughter, Mary. In Lourdes, as in other towns, the poor have the right to gather dry wood on the commons.

Mary put on her wooden shoes, while Bernadette, the elder sister, jealously eyed these preparations. At last,

she said to her mother—"Mamma, let me also go. I will carry home my little bundle of firewood."

"No, no;" quickly answered the mother. "You have got a cough, and the journey may make you worse."

At that moment a neighbor's little girl of about fourteen years old, named Jane Abbadie, entered the Soubirous cottage, she, too, being about to start in quest of firewood. And now the three little girls pressed the mother so urgently that she was forced to yield. Bernadette had by this time wrapped up her head in a kerchief, as is customary among the peasantry of the south of France. But this not being, in the mother's estimation, a sufficient covering, she said: "Bernadette, you had better put on your *capulet*, too." This *capulet* is a sort of graceful hood used only by those who dwell among the Pyrenees. It is made of thick, coarse cloth of a white, and betimes, of a red color. When the weather is cold, or windy, this hood is put on the head, and its lengthy folds are then let fall over the shoulders and back which they protect like a mantelette; if the weather be warm, it is folded up in a sort of quadrangular shape, and is carried on the head. Bernadette's *capulet* was white.

The three little girls set out together, and having crossed the bridge of the Gave, proceeded to the island of *Chalet*. Mary and Jane being more robust stepped out briskly, gathering here and there dry branches with which they soon filled their aprons, while the weak and delicate Bernadette followed slowly in the rear, without having found any.

Sweet little girl! Clothed as she was in a black, threadbare garment, which had been the recipient of many a patch; her face and head wrapped in her white

capulet, which fell in folds over her shoulders, and her feet covered with coarse, wooden shoes, she possessed a simple, innocent grace that charmed the heart more than the eye of the beholder. She was small for her age,* and her child-like countenance, though bronzed from exposure to the sun, had still never lost its native delicacy of expression. Her hair, black and fine, scarcely revealed itself from beneath her head-dress. Her eyebrows were gracefully curved, and her eyes, which were of a brown color—a hue, which in her, rendered them more charming than if they had been blue, shone with a deep, calm beauty, whose limpid brightness no bad passion had ever dimmed. Hers was that eye of which the Gospel speaks: “*If thy eye be single thy whole body shall be lightsome.*” (Matt. vi. 22). Her mouth, wonderfully expressive, betokened within a habitual kindness of disposition, and compassion for the sufferings of humanity. Her face, so sweet and intelligent, charmed the beholder: in a word, the *tout ensemble* of her attractions possessed a spirituality that penetrated the inmost recesses of the soul. One might ask, what was this attractiveness so sublime, and powerfully active in winning the attention of the beholder, which shone out in this ignorant, ragged little girl. It was the majesty of innocence—the grandest and rarest virtue to be met with in this world.

Bernadette tarried behind her sister and the other girl, looking for dry wood in vain. Happy girl! Even as Saul, while in search of the missing horses, found the

*Though she is now about thirty-two years old, she is as low of stature as a child. “It seems,” says Count Lafond, “that God has thought fit to employ the smallest possible bit of clay in the formation of this angelic body.” (Lourdes, p. 120).

sceptre of Juda; as the poor and faithful Ruth, while looking for the ears of corn dropped by the reapers, wins the favor of the rich Boaz, and becomes the grandmother of the royal Prophet; so does this weak, asthmatic little girl, while engaged in looking for wood, meet the Mother of life.

The three little wood-gatherers journeyed on cheerily, and at length arrived at the western extremity of the island of *Chalet*, right in front of the Rock of Massabielle, from which the canal, on this occasion, can scarcely be said to have separated them, for it happened to be dammed up in order that the mill might undergo some necessary repairs. From this point of view were to be seen many dry branches which the wind had blown off the various shrubs that grew above the rock, and which, owing to the dry state of the canal, could be easily gathered. Happy at this discovery, Mary and Jane, diligent and active as Martha of whom mention is made in the Gospel, hurriedly took off their clogs, and crossed the canal.

“The water is very cold,” exclaimed both, resuming their wooden shoes soon as they had arrived on the opposite bank. They did not wonder at the coldness of the water, for it was the month of February, and the rivulet itself was an outpouring of the neighboring Gave whose waters descend from the snow-clad summits of the Pyrenees.

Bernadette's two companions, with all the simplicity of girlhood, engage in edifying anecdote. Bernadette severely réprimanded them for having raised their dresses so high while crossing the canal, and forced them to let them fall lower so as not to offend maiden modesty. She also censured a word let slip by Jane,

which to her seemed unfit to be uttered by the lips of a girl. God, who reveals Himself to the clean of heart, willed that this little girl should give a strong proof of her delicate purity and courageous charity, at a moment when the Queen of Virgins was about to reveal herself before her innocent eyes.

Bernadette, on hearing her companions complain of the coldness of the water, was much troubled; the more so because, differently from them, she wore stockings. So when they had crossed over she said to them:

“Throw two or three large stones into the stream so that I may pass over with dry feet.” But they were already occupied in gathering wood; and Jane, a little piqued, perhaps, by the reproof she had just received, replied: “Oh! do as we have done. Cross over in your bare feet.” And they paid no further attention to her. Bernadette calmly resigned herself to the embarrassment of her situation, and seating herself on one of the large stones that lay scattered along the bank, took off her shoes and stockings.

It was about noon. Soon all the village bells would ring out the Angelus. And lo! whilst the earth echoes the Angelic Salutation in honor of the Virgin, she deigns to descend into the midst of her children.

Whilst Bernadette was stooped down engaged in divesting herself of her shoes and stockings, she felt a strong gust of wind blow around her. In amazement she raises her head and looks around believing it to be the harbinger of a hurricane; but, to her great surprise, everything was unmoved: even the pliant boughs of the poplars, that fringe the Gave, were unconscious of its influence. Not knowing what to think she resumes the

work of loosing her shoes. But lo! the same mighty, awe-inspiring gust of wind resounds above her, and dies amid the rocks of Massabielle. Now, even more surprised than before, she arises and turns her eyes towards the Grotto. The wild rose-bush that tapestried the base of the niche with its long branches, now stripped of their leaves, moved slightly to the breeze. But soon the niche is lit up with a celestial brightness, in the midst of which appears a lady of incomparable beauty. She wore a snow-white robe confined by a sky-blue girdle, knotted in front, and extending in doubles to her feet. On her head was a veil of spotless white, which fell loosely over her shoulders, and extended the whole length of her person. From beneath her snow-white robe her feet were visible as they rested on the branches of the rose-bush, which yielded not to her gentle pressure. On each foot bloomed a golden rose. A rosary strung in gold, whose stones were pure as dew-drops, depended from her hands joined with heavenly fervor. She was silent; but later her words, and the miracles it is our office to record, proved that she was the Immaculate Virgin, the most august Mother of God.

This wonderful apparition kept steadily looking on Bernadette, who, in her amazement, had by this time mechanically prostrated herself upon her knees. By natural instinct, or by a movement of grace, she took out her beads, and grasping the Crucifix, endeavored to make the sign of the cross. But such was her commotion that she was unable to raise her arm, which fell powerless on her lap.

The Mother of divine grace, the peerless Virgin, with ineffable sweetness, takes hold of the cross of her own

beads, and with heavenly unction signs herself with the sign of the cross.*

Encouraged by this act of the Apparition, Bernadette also makes the sign of the cross. All her fears pass away. Dazzled, entranced, doubting her senses, and passing her hands across her eyes, which are constantly attracted by the celestial vision, she humbly recites her Rosary, at the end of which the bright Virgin instantly disappeared, leaving Bernadette transported out of herself, or, to speak more correctly, like one who has lost in an instant the sweetest consolation. How sad the rock, the river, and everything around appeared to her now!

Having put her beads in her pocket, she commenced to undo her shoes once more; and, as soon as she had touched the water with her naked feet, she shouted with surprise, for to her it felt tepid. On hearing her scream, Bernadette's sister and her companion ran to her. Having touched her feet they were much surprised to find them warm. What did this mean? Did this warmth come from the internal glowing of her pure soul, or was it caused by a miracle? However it happened her companions were lost in wonder at so strange an event. Having by this time tied up their bundles, they entered the Grotto to amuse themselves quietly. They had previously seen Bernadette on her knees at prayer; but as the children of the mountain districts are accustomed

* When commencing the Rosary the Italians have a custom of holding the beads in the left hand while making the sign of the cross. In France the custom is different. There the beads is taken hold of about the middle of the third mystery with the left hand placed upon the breast, while with the right the cross or medal is passed to the forehead, breast, and shoulders.

to pray a little while during work-hours, they wondered not that she was similarly engaged. Rather did Bernadette wonder at seeing them so calm and unmoved as if nothing extraordinary had happened.

“Have you seen anything?” asked Bernadette.

“No,” they replied. “Have you?”

“If you have seen nothing, then I have nothing to tell you.” She feared that the very narration of what had happened might dim the joy of her heart. But her companions were not slow to observe along the way home that her mind was agitated; and they stormed her with a thousand questions, which she evaded. However, she related all to her sister privately, enjoining on her the strictest silence. But Mary had scarcely entered the house till she told her mother every tittle.

“You are silly children,” said the mother. And turning to Bernadette, she asked her “what kind of a foolish story it was she had just heard from her sister?” The little girl related her version of the event, but the mother was incredulous. “You have been deceived, my child. You believed you saw something, but you saw nothing. It is all childish fancy.” But Bernadette insisted on the truth of her narration.

“It may possibly be an evil spirit,” concluded the mother. “And I forbid you to return to the Grotto.”

But the mother’s fears increased at evening; for when she and her family had been assembled around the common hearth to recite, as was their custom, the night prayers, Bernadette suddenly stopped short in the recitation of the *Ave Maria*, for her voice was choked with sighs. The mother rises in alarm, gets the candle, and places it near the face of her child. The girl’s countenance wore a singular expression, while from her open eyes had

dropped two tears, which were now resting on her cheeks. Doubtless, this commotion was produced in her by the recitation of the *Ave Maria*, which a few hours previously she had recited in the Grotto before the heavenly Apparition.

Thus terminated the 11th of February, 1858, a day so important for Bernadette and for the Catholic world.

And now, dear reader, pause, and note in the first place, that mighty gust of wind that spent its force amid the rocks of Massabielle. A wind like this was felt when the Holy Spirit descended on the Apostles on the day of Pentecost, and took possession of their hearts and souls. Was it not the Spirit of God that came to take possession of the rock of Massabielle? Whatever it was it is certain that when one stands in front of that rock, he feels, even to-day, a certain charm, a sweetness that inebriates, a sentiment that inspires respect and devotion, a fervor which, like a sweet unction, moves and invites him to indulge in calm, delicious tears. Who can doubt that it was the Spirit of God who descended in that mighty wind that had caused Bernadette so much amazement?

Note secondly, and in a special manner, dear reader, the sign of the cross which the Holy Virgin made with the Crucifix attached to her beads, thereby inviting the little girl to do likewise. It was afterwards noticed during the other apparitions which occurred in the same place, that Bernadette always made the sign of the cross; and this she did with such heavenly unction and fervor as to ravish with delight the hearts of the fortunate spectators. A certain priest, badly informed, and consequently incredulous regarding the events reported of the Grotto, asked a distinguished lawyer of Lourdes,

at whose faith in the apparitions he wondered much, "why he believed them?"

"I believe them," replied the lawyer, "because I have seen them. I have seen Bernadette make the sign of the cross on her person. It is only in heaven that the sign of the cross is so made."

Therefore, dear reader, make the following

MEDITATION.

I. Consider *the persons who make the sign of the cross.* The Virgin Mary, during the first apparition, makes no demonstration except the sign of the cross. It would seem that she had come down from heaven for the sole purpose of giving us this lesson. The Catholic Church makes use of the sign of the cross every moment in the Mass, in the administration of the Sacraments, and in her other sacred functions. The Saints made it a thousand times during the day. The Sovereign Pontiffs have granted great indulgences to those who make it with devotion. Of what vast importance, therefore, must it not be? How much importance do you usually attach to it?

II. Consider *the mysteries that are wrapped up in the sign of the cross.* By saying *in the name*, and not *in the names*, we proclaim the unity of God. By saying *of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost*, we announce the Trinity of Divine Persons. Finally, by the sign of the cross, that instrument on which Jesus Christ died to redeem us, we profess our faith in the Incarnation of the Son of God, and the Redemption of the human family. These are the three principal mysteries of Catholic faith. They are the most necessary, for

without knowing them, no one, who has come to the use of reason can be saved. * * * Do you reflect on these mysteries when you make the sign of the cross? Oh! did you, even once seriously reflect on them, with what immense advantage to yourself would you make that saving sign!

III. *The utility and efficacy of the sign of the cross.* By it is revived faith, which in you is so weak, and almost dead, on account of your dissipations, and the impressions made on you by the bad example of the world. By it those temptations that assail you on every side, and to which, alas! you too often yield, to the great detriment of your faith, purity, humility, and charity, are put to flight. By it, too, many good things both for the soul and body, are obtained from God. By the sign of the cross the Emperor Constantine conquered his enemies, and converted them to Christianity. By it St. Benedict shivered to pieces the poisoned cup presented to him to drink, and thus saved his life. By it St. Margaret, V.M., put to flight the devil who appeared to her in human shape in order to shake her virtue. By it the Martyrs extinguished the flames, or were enabled to endure their torments heroically. By it the Thaumaturgi worked miracles. * * * Do you believe in the power of the cross? Do you think over it in your heart?

Ah! resolve to make the sign of the cross—but in doing so, endeavor to imitate the Holy Virgin and Bernadette, every morning when you arise from bed, every evening before retiring to repose, before and after meals, while reciting your prayers, and whenever temptation assails you.

Practice.—Make this day the sign of the cross twelve

times in memory of the twelve stars that crown the Immaculate Virgin in heaven.

Ejaculation.—*Fac me cruce inebriari.* O Lady of Lourdes! obtain for me grace to love the cross.

CHAPTER IV.

The Exorcism, or Second Apparition.

“Be of good heart: it is I, fear ye not.” MATT. XIV. 27.

“You must not believe every spirit,” writes the Apostle and Evangelist, St. John, “but must try the spirits if they be of God.” (John I. IV. 1). Such has ever been the practice of the Catholic Church when examining into extraordinary apparitions. We must not instantly believe that the apparition is supernatural, for it might possibly be an illusion of the senses. We must not refer it right away to God, for it might proceed from the cunning of the devil, who is ever ready to deceive us as he did our first parents of old in the garden of Paradise. The Catholic Church is, therefore, very careful regarding apparitions, and subjects them to a *criterium* by means of which she can ascertain with certainty whether they be the work of God, or of evil spirits; and this *criterium* these little girls employed in their own simple way, in order to investigate the first apparition at Lourdes.

Having been forbidden by her mother to return to the Grotto, Bernadette felt very much discomposed. The beautiful Lady had so enamored her by the first apparition that the innocent little girl could think of

nothing beside. She spoke of the vision continually, on Friday and Saturday, the 12th and 13th of February, to her sister Mary, to Jane, and other girls of the same age. And on Sunday, the 14th, the last day of the Carnival, returning home from Mass, she entreated her companions to assist her in obtaining her mother's permission to pay another visit to the rocks of Massabielle. Curiosity worked upon their little brains, but not, however, to the exclusion of prudence.

"May not the apparition be the effect of witch-craft? May it not be some evil spirit?" said some of the girls with no little fear.

"Whatever it be," said one, "we must sprinkle it with holy water; and we can rest assured if it be the devil he will take to flight."

"Address it thus," burst forth another: "If you come from God, approach us, but if from the devil, depart."

Surely this was the very formula of exorcism used by the Church; and in this instance these little theologians of Lourdes, having learned their catechism, and having been well instructed by their pastor, reasoned with a prudence and exactness worthy of a Doctor of the Sorbôn.

Bernadette smiled, thereby making it apparent to her companions that she, at least, did not believe she had seen an evil spirit, for never before had she seen a countenance so wonderfully benign. Nevertheless, a slight apprehension had just begun to influence her, too; and she decided in accordance with the counsel of her young friends, to bring holy water and sprinkle the apparition.

But the difficulty was to obtain permission from Ber-

nadette's mother. Accordingly after dinner all the girls went in a body to the house to make a formal assault upon her. At first she remained firm in refusing, alleging as a motive that the Gave river flowed quite near the rocks, that it was dangerous for them to go, that the hour of Vespers was drawing nigh, and that they should not expose themselves to the risk of getting lost; finally, that they were very silly little girls. Resist the urgings and entreaties of such a crowd of little pleaders, indeed! They all promised to be extremely prudent and cautious, and to make great haste in order to be back in time for Vespers; and mother Soubirous was forced to yield.

Happy as if enjoying an Easter festival, the girls directed their steps to the parish church. There they prayed awhile; and then one, who had brought a bottle with her, went to fill it at the holy water font. Arrayed in this spiritual armor, all proceeded towards the rocks of Massabielle. Other girls joined them on the way, and the little troop soon increased so considerably as to attract the attention of the passers by. Their great courage and quick decided gait were also noticed.

Having arrived at the Grotto, they immediately scrutinized the niche and every part of the rock; but everything looked cold and unattractive as usual. There was no apparition to be seen.

"Let us pray," said Bernadette. "Let us recite the Rosary." And the girls all fell upon their knees, and commenced, each for herself, that devotional exercise so much loved by heaven's Queen.

In a moment Bernadette's face becomes transfigured; extraordinary emotion is depicted there. Her eyes growing more and more brilliant, seem to glow with

heavenly light. Standing on the rock, in that very same niche, and clothed as before, the wonderful apparition revealed herself to her gaze. "There she is! there she is!" hurriedly exclaimed Bernadette. "Look at her; see how she smiles; she is now approaching me, and wishes to give me her hand."

But alas! the vision of Bernadette's companions had not been divested of that carnal veil which shuts out from view glorified bodies. They saw nothing; but one of them advanced, and placed the bottle of holy water in Bernadette's hand, reminding her to sprinkle the Apparition. Bernadette arose, and with quick and repeated sprinklings soon bedewed the feet and person of the wonderful Lady, and in a loud voice addressed her in these words: "If you come from God, approach." Whereupon the Lady bowed frequently, and advanced as far as the edge of the niche, smiling at Bernadette's precaution, her arms of war, and at the sacred name of God, her face grew still more luminous.

"If you come from God, approach," repeated Bernadette; and she wished to add: "But if you come from the devil, retire;" but seeing the apparition so resplendent with heavenly light and beneficence, her heart failed her. Those words which had been dictated to her, appeared monstrous in presence of that incomparable being, and fled from her thoughts before they could be uttered by her lips.

"You see her well," she added, addressing her companions. "At the name of God she raised her beautiful eyes to heaven. She is now looking and smiling at us. Look! the wind moves her girdle. * * * Oh! how beautiful she is!"

Bernadette knelt again, and continued her Rosary,

which appeared to please the Lady much, for she, too, held her beads in her hands and passed its decades between her fingers. The Rosary being finished, the Lady blessed herself with the cross attached to the beads, and smiling benignly, disappeared.

Then Bernadette arose, as also did her companions: and all proceeded homeward—Bernadette being the central figure of the affectionate little group. They had assisted at her transfiguration. They doubted not that she had seen some supernatural being; but in its present state, human nature fears the supernatural. Hence it is that the Hebrews said to Moses: “Speak thou to us instead of the Lord, lest we die.” And the little girls of Lourdes said to Bernadette: “We are afraid. We shall not go back there again, for what you have seen may have come to injure us.” And they walked on in a compact body, attracting the attention of many along the way who put them a number of questions. Soon the news spread, and became the subject of general conversation, especially after Vespers, at which, according to promise, the girls were in time to assist.

And now, dear reader, rest a little, and make the following

MEDITATION.

I. Consider the *antiquity* and the *use* of holy water in the Church. Like other practices, the blessing of water dates back to the days of the Apostles, and is akin to the custom the primitive Christians had of washing the hands and face with blessed water before entering church. From those early times it has been customary

to keep blessed water at the entrance of the church. The priest sprinkles the faithful every Sunday with holy water immediately before the Parochial Mass. Holy water is used in the benediction of the sacred vestments, crucifixes, images, rosaries, medals; in the dedication of churches, and the blessing of cemeteries. The sick are sprinkled with holy water before receiving the last sacraments—in a word, whatever benediction is imparted, holy water is used during the ceremony; and the Church advises her children to keep it always in their houses, and to bless themselves with it frequently. * * * Do you make use of it? Are you not one of those light or impious creatures, who mock this pious custom, and blaspheme what they are ignorant of?

II. Consider the *signification* of holy water, and the *motive* for which it is used. Man has fallen from his primitive perfection. The devil, by conquering him, has also conquered all earthly creatures, which are, therefore, permeated by his malignant influence. Jesus, by his cross, has resuscitated and sanctified all things. *Instaurare omnia in Christo.* (Ephes. i. 10). And therefore, has He given power to His Church to bless water and other creatures; and this she does with exorcisms and the sign of the cross, by means of which she expels, in the name of her Divine Spouse, the devil from those creatures, and prays God to sanctify them, in order that they may serve man, and draw down upon him divine blessings. These exorcisms, accompanied by the sign of the cross, are pronounced over the water and the salt while being blessed and commingled by the priest, who wears his stole as a symbol of the authority the Church has received from Jesus Christ. * * * Do you believe all this? If you do not, how call yourself a Catholic?

How do you recognise the Church, which is the pillar and ground of truth, to be your infallible teacher?

III. Consider the *effects* produced by holy water. First, it expels the devil and his pernicious influence from wherever it is sprinkled; secondly, it brings down God's favors upon us, upon our houses, and upon all we possess; thirdly, it enlivens our faith, and cancels venial sin. Do you believe in these effects? The most sublime geniuses, and the most devout men, who have ever adorned the world by the brilliancy of their intellects, or edified it by the sanctity of their lives, have set you the example of belief. Origen, Tertullian, St. Augustine, St. John Chrisostom, St. Ephifanius, St. Jerome, St. Gregory, St. Thomas, etc., have all believed these things. Are you wiser, or more virtuous than they?

Resolve to hold blessed water in high estimation. Dip your finger in it as you enter the church, saying at the same time: "*Wash me yet more from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin.*" (Psalm L.) Keep it near your bed, and sprinkle yourself with it before retiring to rest. Sign your forehead with it every morning and evening, and in times of sickness, temptation, danger, and doubt.

Practice.—Sign yourself to-day with holy water five times in memory of the five wounds of the Savior, which have conquered the devil; also in memory of the five letters, M A R I A, which form the dear name of the Immaculate Virgin.

Ejaculation.—*Nos cum prole pia benedicat Virgo Maria.* May the Virgin Mary, with her holy Offspring, bless us.

CHAPTER V.

Mary Invites us to Lourdes, or the Third Apparition.

‘Come children, hearken to me: I will teach you the fear of the Lord.’ Psalm xxxiii, 12.

The news of the two apparitions at the Grotto of Massabielle, had spread during the last days of the Carnival, throughout the city of Lourdes, and many went to Bernadette’s house to ask her questions. She answered their thousand interrogations with the utmost precision. It was possible she might have been deceived, as even her parents believed; but it was enough to see her, and hear her speak, to be certain of her own implicit belief in the reality of the apparitions. Her perfect simplicity, her youthful innocence, the irresistible force of her words—all formed, one knew not how, an *ensemble* that gave wonderful weight to her narration, and claimed for it the belief of her hearers. Doubtless, all admitted that something wonderful had taken place amid the rocks of Massabielle.

But, supposing the apparition to be a reality, the question was to ascertain what it was. Faith and superstition contended for superiority in the minds of the people. Many were of the opinion that the apparition, in consequence of its having been clothed in white, was a soul from purgatory asking for prayers for its repose: others, that it was a blessed soul—nay, the soul of a certain person (and they particularized one) who died a short time before in the odor of sanctity, and who now appeared in its glory to impart advice. Others pronounced opinions perfectly superstitious.

Amongst those who had come to interrogate Bernadette on Ash-Wednesday, the 17th of February, were a

young widow named Madam Millet, and Antoinette Peyret, a daughter of Mary of the Congregation of Lourdes. These, having heard the little girl speak of the two first apparitions, were convinced that it was a soul from purgatory supplicating the suffrages of the faithful.

“Ask the Lady,” said they to Bernadette, “who she is, and what she wants—nay, in case you may not clearly understand her, ask her to give you her demands in writing.” They then asked the mother, Madam Soubirous, to permit her to return to the Grotto in their company, and she consented.

On the following morning, the 18th of February and the first Thursday of Lent, Madam Millet, Antoinette Peyret, and Bernadette, heard the 5½ o'clock Mass in the parish church, and at six o'clock set out for the Grotto.

But the repairs of the mill having been finished, the water was allowed to course through the canal, thus rendering it impossible for them to cross it. Wherefore, in place of going to the rock by way of the island of Chalet, they were obliged to ascend a steep acclivity by a way difficult of passage, and then descend on the other side by a series of dangerous steps. In view of these difficulties Bernadette's companions, although young, almost lost courage; but not so she, who, as if troubled no more by the asthma, or as if borne along by an unseen power, stepped out at such a rapid gait that with difficulty they could follow her. Having gained the summit, her companions were out of breath, and perspiring freely; but Bernadette, on the contrary, felt not inconvenienced in the least, but was perfectly at ease. She then descended the rock with the same ease,

although this was her first time to attempt such a feat. On the summit of this almost perpendicular cliff, along whose slopes were scattered in profusion pieces of broken rocks that would give way to ordinary pressure, overlooking the deep abyss, she walked with as sure and firm steps as if she had been on the most level foot-way. Madam Millet and Antoinette could not keep up with her along this trackless route. They descended very slowly, using all the precaution necessary in such dangerous circumstances.

Bernadette, as we may see, arrived at the Grotto some time before her companions. She knelt down and commenced her Rosary, keeping her eyes fixed on the niche. Suddenly she screamed. The well-known light was shining in the depths of the cavity. A voice calls her. The beautiful Lady, with face resplendent as the sun, appears, and bows to her, and beckons her to approach. At this very moment the other two arrive, and behold Bernadette's face all transfigured in ecstasy. Still, Bernadette alone, sees and hears the apparition.

Addressing them she says: "the Lady is here, and beckons me to approach her."

"Ask her if she has any objection for us to remain with you, because if she has, we will go away."

Bernadette looked at the Lady, listened for a moment, and turning to them said: "Do you also remain." Then they knelt beside the little girl, and lit the candle they had brought with them. "It was the first time," observes M. Lasserre, "that such a light, betokening the inauguration of a sanctuary, had shone there."

Meanwhile, Bernadette, in ecstatic rapture, contemplates the beauty of her, who is called *all beautiful and without stain*.

“Since she calls you, and beckons you to approach her, do so,” said her two companions “Ask her who she is, and why she comes here?” If she is a soul from purgatory in need of prayers, or of a Mass? Entreat her to write her desires on this sheet of paper. * * * We are ready to comply with her wishes, and to do everything necessary for her repose.”

Bernadette took the paper, pen, and ink offered her, and advanced towards the Apparition, which encouraged her with sweet, maternal smiles. But still, at every step she made forward, the Lady retired little by little into the interior of the niche. Bernadette lost sight of her for an instant, but descended beneath the arch of the Grotto. There, always above her, but now much nearer, she sees the Lady through the internal aperture of the niche. She stood on tip-toe, and stretching out her arms to their full length, endeavored to hand the Lady the writing utensils. The two companions, anxious to know what the Vision should say, advanced also. But Bernadette, without turning her head around, and as if in obedience to a signal from the Lady, motioned them with her hand not to advance further. They retired in confusion.

“My Lady,” then spoke the child, “if you have anything to tell me, be so kind as to write on this paper who you are and what you desire.

The Lady smiled at this ingenuous request, and said : “What I have to tell you, I have no need to write. Only do me the favor to come here for fifteen days.” *

“By these words,” said the Mons. Bishop of Poitiers in his celebrated Homily delivered on the Banks of the Gave on the 3d of July, 1876, “the Virgin Mary made it evident that she was of the family of Him, who, with great reverence, holds intercourse with His most lowly creatures.” *Cum magna reverentia disponis nos.* Sap. xii. 15.

“I promise you to do so,” replied Bernadette.

The Lady smiled again, and signifying her satisfaction, answered: “And I promise to make you happy, not indeed in this world, but in the next.”

Bernadette, without losing sight of the Apparition, turned towards her companions, and noticed that the Lady, whom she closely observed, kept for a considerable time, looking with great benevolence, at Antoinette Peyret, who was the daughter of Mary of the Congregation of Lourdes, and therefore unmarried.

“The Lady is looking at you, now,” said Bernadette to her virgin companion.

She was considerably moved by the intelligence; the memory of which was ever after indelibly stamped upon her soul. Meanwhile Bernadette related to her companions all the Lady had said to her, as well as the promise she herself had made.

“Ask the Lady now if she would feel displeased for us to accompany you each day for the fortnight.”

Bernadette looked at the Apparition, which replied: “They can come with you, they and others beside. I wish to see a great number assemble here.” Having spoken thus, the Lady disappeared; and the light that had shone around her, faded away, as it did on the two first occasions.

Then Bernadette related how, when the apparition commences, she sees the light first, and then the Lady; but when it terminates, the Lady disappears first, and then the aureola fades away.

Reflect, dear reader; and as you see how, even in Lourdes, superstition was mixed with the true Religion, seriously make the following

MEDITATION.

I. Consider that God demands of you the *true Religion*—that is to say, He claims from you that internal and external worship which is due Him as Lord of all things; and therefore, He calls upon you to adore Him, to offer Him all your prayers and devotions, to fulfill your vows, to swear with the necessary conditions, and to offer Him sacrifice, especially by assisting piously at the Holy Mass. Examine yourself dilligently upon these duties you owe to God. * * * Do you fulfill them? God is your creator and preserver. He has given you all the good things you possess, and is ever ready to give you more. Justice and gratitude demand of you to give Him the whole homage of your heart. Are you not of the number of those who think that in order to be saved, it is sufficient not to be guilty of robbery, murder, and the like?

II. God abhors *superstition*, which, according to Cicero, is a vice derived from the Pagans who prayed their false divinities for the welfare of their children, and is, therefore, an outrage on true religion, for by it we either offer Him a distorted worship, or set up an idol in His place. Examine therefore whether you be not one of those who offer to God a false, base, indecent, or a superfluous worship, or who love creatures more than Him. Examine yourself also as to whether you have consulted fortune-tellers, astrologers, and other such diviners, or played at cards in order to ascertain the future; if you have given credit to dreams, and vainly observed superstitious practices, for example, by being afraid of the number 13, of upsetting the salt-cellar at table, of Friday, &c. How many Christians dishonor,

in this way, the true religion, which is so beautiful and rational! Are you one of these?

III. Consider how *curiosity* in things appertaining to religion, displeases God. The two women, who through curiosity had accompanied Bernadette to the Grotto, were debarred the privilege of seeing the apparition. Are not you one of those who consult dream-interpreters in time of sickness, or participate, in any way, in the practices of spiritism, which has been condemned by the Church? How many there are who will not believe truths of faith, and yet do not hesitate to place implicit credence in wretched creatures, or even in the devil! Are you of this number?

Resolve to become well instructed in the practices of the Catholic Religion, by reading good books, and by attending the instructions of your pastor. Ignorance of religion is one of those evils which, in our days, work so much ruin among souls. Study, therefore, your religion, which is so beautiful.

Practice.—Read for a quarter of an hour, some good book treating on religion—if it were only the little catechism, and promise to be punctual in attending the instructions of your pastor.

Ejaculation.—*Solve vincla reis, profer lumen Coecis.* O Mary Immaculate! loose for sinners the chains that bind them, and illumine the blind that they may see the light of the Catholic religion.

CHAPTER VI.

The Fourth, Fifth and Sixth Apparitions, or the True Mother.

Do not consider me that I am brown * * * the sons of my mother have fought against me. CANT. CANT. 1. 5.

The fourth and fifth apparitions took place on Thursday and Friday, the 19th and 20th of February, in the usual way, but nothing particular happened on these occasions. Let us, therefore, turn our attention to the sixth, which occurred on the first Sunday of Lent, the 21st of February.

On the preceding Thursday, as soon as she had reached home, Bernadette told her parents of the invitation given her by the Lady to return to the Grotto once a day for a fortnight, and of her own promise to comply. On the other hand, Madam Millet and Antoniette Peyret told every one about the little girl's transfiguration, as well as of the invitation of the Lady for great numbers to go to the rocks of Massabielle. That Thursday was a market day at Lourdes; hence, a great number had gathered there. We can, therefore, easily understand how on the evening of that day, the news of the apparitions spread through the mountains, valleys, and the surrounding towns. On the following morning about a hundred persons had already assembled at the Grotto by the time Bernadette arrived. On Saturday the crowd numbered from four to five hundred, and on Sunday morning over a thousand persons were at the Grotto before sun-rise.

About six o'clock Bernadette arrived, accompanied by one of her companions, who, having witnessed her ecstasies, now believed in the reality of the apparitions.

Passing through the midst of the multitude, who respectfully made a passage for her, without too much self-reliance, and yet without embarrassment, nay, seeming not to notice the universal attention of which she was the object, she hurried on to prostrate herself at the foot of the niche. In one hand she held her rosary, and in the other, a candle, which had certainly been given her as a present. A physician, named Dr. Dozous, took his place beside her. Many questions had been raised in the city regarding Bernadette's transfigurations. Some said the girl was afflicted with catalepsy—some that she was suffering from hallucination of her intellect—some that she was the victim of other disease. The Doctor wished to ascertain the truth, and therefore, set about studying the fact with attention.

Only a few moments had passed ere Bernadette was on her knees; and lo! soon her face beams with radiance and surpassing splendor. Still it was not the blood that had rushed to her face, for it was slightly pale. Every look of hers seemed to soar aloft into a superior realm, and enter as it were, into a region of glory where her features were lit up with a joy and consolation that this world knows not of. Her lips, half apart, wore an expression of admiration, and seemed to breathe of heaven. Her eyes fixed and happy, were gazing on some invisible beauty, which no other could see, but whose presence every one felt, for all, so to speak, were conscious of its proximity because they saw its reflection in the illuminated countenance of the child. This poor little peasant girl, so uncouth in her habits, seemed now no longer a denizen of earth. She was an angel of innocence who had quitted this world for a moment, and had fallen down in adoration while con-

templating the glories of paradise whose portals had been just thrown open to her eyes. All who have seen Bernadette in ecstasy, speak of her as a sublime creature whose like cannot be found on earth; and their memories are as fresh regarding her to-day, as they were when the wonderful events recorded took place eighteen years ago.

And yet, how strange to relate! while her attention was entirely absorbed in the contemplation of the Holy Virgin, she was still, in part, conscious of what was taking place around. Once her candle happened to get extinguished, and she reached out her hand to the person next her in order to have it lighted. Some one having made an effort to touch the rose-bush with a stick, she immediately made a sign to the person to desist, her face wearing an expression of fear.

She was afraid, as she afterwards candidly said, that if the Lady were touched, she might receive a hurt.

All this happened before the eyes of Dr. Dozous, who studied with the utmost care, all Bernadette's movements; and here is what he writes about the occurrence in his book entitled *La Grotte de Lourdes, sa fontaine et ses guerisons*: "I wished to know at the time the state of the circulation of her blood, and of her respiration. I took hold of her arm, and placed my finger upon the radial artery. Her pulse was tranquil and regular, and her respiration, easy. Nothing indicated in the girl over-nervous excitement, which would have reacted in a particular manner upon her whole organism."

As soon as her arm was set free, she advanced a little on her knees under the vault of the Grotto, because the Apparition had retired back into the niche, and

Bernadette could not see it except through the interior opening. There, the Lady, elevating her eyes for a moment above the little girl's head, seemed to direct their gaze far out over the prospect, and then fixed it upon her anew—but there was sadness in that look.

“What is the matter, Lady, that you are so sad?” said the little girl. “What do you wish to be done?”

“I wish,” replied the Lady, “that prayers be offered up for poor sinners, and for the world so much agitated.”

Perceiving the grief of her Lady, suddenly Bernadette's heart was transfixed with anguish. A melancholy beyond the powers of description, began its gloomy reign upon her countenance, and from her open eyes two big tears had dropped upon her cheeks, and rested there. But soon the Lady laid aside her expression of sadness, and assuming once again her radiant smiles and sweet benignity, disappeared. And Bernadette's face also soon resumed its wonted calm, and then commenced to descend, as it were, from the bright regions of the sun to the sombre atmosphere of earth; and her rustic habits were once more visible, and she looked a mere humble shepherdess, a poor little peasant girl, having no characteristic to distinguish her from the ordinary country girls around. Dr. Dozous and the whole crowd gathered around her in an instant, to whom she gave with simplicity and precision, a full account of what had happened.

My dear reader, have you reflected on the words of Holy Scripture, with which, by way of epigraph, I have headed this chapter? They are applicable to the Holy Virgin, who therefore says: “Wonder not if you see me brown. It is not my natural color, but has been superinduced by the sun of grief, because the children of my

mother have warred against me.”—Cant. Cant. 1, 5. That is to say, wonder not if you see me sad and transfixed with a sword of grief. In heaven I am happy; but all that you see is the effect of the pain I feel at the sins committed by the very sons of my mother, Eve—that is by my own brothers, who, by violating the Commandments of God and of the Church, wage war against God and against me.

From your heart, then, make the following

MEDITATION.

I. Consider how much the Most Holy Virgin *suffers for our sins*. Sin, which, in order to be expiated, demanded the death of her Divine Son, Jesus, was also, while she was on earth, the cause of her dolors—the intensity of whose pain it is beyond the power of man to describe, or to comprehend. Sin, while it renews the crucifixion of Jesus Christ, as St. Paul says, (Heb. vi. 6) reproduces also, in all their bitterness, the dolors of the Virgin Mary. It is true she is now in heaven, and consequently beyond the reach of sufferings, but this does not free sinners from the awful responsibility of renewing, as far as in them lies, all her anguish. How wicked is the sinner’s heart! Why does he not reflect on this? Why does he not think over it in his heart? O, suffering Mother! You, O sinner! heap crime upon crime, and she is transfixed with a sword of grief. * * * She weeps as she did at La Salette on the 19th of September, 1846. * * * How do we feel, dear reader, in this regard?

II. Consider how much the Most Holy Virgin is grieved *by the agitations that now disturb the world*: so many revolutions without the slightest shadow of justice

on their side, so many robberies committed on the Catholic Church, so many governments devoid of all religion, who have drawn the sword of persecution against the spouse of Jesus Christ, so many scandals, blasphemies, immodesties. * * * And such being the state of society in our days, we can realize how great the danger of perversion for the weak, the young, and the innocent, and the consequent risk of eternal damnation. * * * Are you one of those deluded creatures who approve of certain accomplished facts in defiance of the unanimous consent of the Catholic Bishops, and the Pope? Have you not co-operated in their accomplishment by your acts, by your expressions, by buying and reading books and journals written in defence of such sacrileges?

III. Consider that the first request manifested by the Madonna of Lourdes was *to pray for sinners*. Perhaps you have never reflected on this spiritual work of mercy, so dear to God and to His Blessed Mother, because of its being so profitable to souls. The Prophet Nathan, prayed for sinful David; Onias, for Heliodorus, etc. * * * "Pray one for another, that you may be saved. For the continual prayer of the just man availeth much," writes the Apostle, St. James (Jas. v. 16). And further, is not the express desire of our Mother sufficient for you? And you, devout soul, who, perhaps, recite such long prayers every day, and make so many Communions, etc.—do you do anything for poor sinners?

Resolve, if you fall into mortal sin, not to let the sun go down that day without having first gone to Confession; and then persevere in the grace of God.

Practice.—Recite to-day at least the third part of the Rosary for the conversion of sinners.

Ejaculation.—Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us, sinners!

CHAPTER VII.

The Chapel demanded, or the Seventh and Eighth Apparitions.

“Thou hast commanded me to build a temple on Thy holy mount.”
Wisd. ix. 8.

Up to this date, the 21st of February, although the knowledge of the apparitions at the Grotto formed the ordinary theme of conversation in Lourdes and the adjacent towns, and although all possible interpretations were advanced on the subject, still no one had openly dared to contradict Bernadette to her face. On that Sunday after Vespers, she was cited by the Commissary of Police, who, as we shall note in the second part of this volume, forbade her under severe penalties to go again to the Grotto, and compelled her parents to enforce his prohibition. Accordingly, on the following day, although a great number of persons had assembled there at the usual hour waiting her arrival, she, obedient child, did not go; but towards noon, returning from school, she felt some irresistible power urging her thither, and she went—but the Most Holy Virgin did not appear to her. On her return home, she related all to her parents, who, notwithstanding the threats of the Commissary of Police, withdrew their prohibition. Wherefore, the seventh apparition took place on Tuesday, 23d of February, at the usual hour.

“Bernadette,” said the Lady.

“Here I am,” replied she.

“I wish to tell you a secret—you alone, for you only does it concern. Do you promise me not to divulge it to any one in the world ?

“I do,” replied the little girl. Then followed a dialogue between the Lady and Bernadette regarding a mystery, the nature of which we cannot, and ought not, investigate.

“And now, my daughter,” terminated the Lady, “go tell the priests that I wish a chapel to be built here.” While speaking these words, her countenance, her looks and gestures seemed to promise graces innumerable to be obtained there ; and she disappeared.

“What has the Vision told you ?” asked the multitude, gathering around Bernadette as soon as they saw her transfiguration had terminated

“The Lady has told me two things ; one for myself alone, and the other for the priests, and I am just going to them,” replied Bernadette, impatient to deliver her commission : accordingly she returned in all haste to the city, the crowd following behind. Having arrived at the parochial residence, she asked for an interview with the Pastor, who soon came to see her. But, as we shall have occasion to record in the second part of this book, he received her coldly, and, as his prudence directed, gave no credit to her words, threatened her with the judgment of God if she was telling a lie, and dismissed her with the obligation of saying to the *Lady of the Grotto*, “that if she wished a chapel, she must needs give a sure sign of her power,—viz : to make the wild rose-bush beneath her feet flower in the depth of winter.”

And in fact, the next morning, Wednesday, 24th of February on which the eighth apparition occurred, the

little girl related the Pastor's words to the Lady, who without speaking, received them with a smile. Then she commanded the child to pray for sinners, and to descend into the depths of the Grotto, exclaiming three times—Penance! Penance! Penance!—words which she repeated as she descended on her knees into the depths below, a distance of about fifteen metres. Within those silent depths the Lady revealed to her another secret, and disappeared. Such is the faithful account which Bernadette immediately went to narrate to the Pastor, who took the matter into consideration, and dismissed her saying: "Very well; we shall see. Let us await the issue." Nevertheless, he remained firm in the prohibition he had at first issued to his assistant priests not to visit the Grotto; and they never did.

MEDITATION.

I. Consider how the most Holy Virgin demands a Chapel at the Grotto, and in due time a magnificent and most costly Basilica is raised in her honor; and learn hence the *necessity* of temples and churches. In the first place, God is the creator and master of all things, and therefore, all things, even the material, should tend to give him glory. Secondly, in the old law God Himself, demanded a temple, which was the wonder of the world, and wished that in its construction there should be used gold, and silver, and precious stones, and timber of sweetest perfume carved with exquisite taste—in fact the description is so marvelous that unless it was furnished in the inspired writings, one would scarcely believe it. Did He not thus make known His divine will? Thirdly, it was the custom of all the different peoples of the earth, both in ancient

and modern times, to build temples to the Divinity, as history proves. Is not that then a voice of nature which calls upon us to raise temples to God under the invocation of the Blessed Virgin, or of the Saints? Are you, dear reader, one of those who say: "What need is there of so many churches?" * * * Do you co-operate as far as in your power, in offering God this manner of worship?

II. Consider the *advantage* we receive from churches. First, in them reposes the Most Holy Sacrament, so that in our very midst we have our Master to assist us; secondly, in them we can offer up our prayers, attend Mass, and receive the Sacraments with so much spiritual fruit; thirdly, in them we are taught the several duties of our respective states; fourthly, by the grandeur of decoration, and the magnificence of the sacred functions our hearts, which are so material in their tendencies, and consequently so much in need of external help, are raised up to God; fifthly, into them our bodies are brought after death in order to have the last prayers and benediction pronounced over them. Do you think of this? Have you not experienced a thousand spiritual benefits yourself if you have prayed devoutly and with recollection in the church?

III. But would it not be better to give to the poor what is wasted on churches, on their pompous decorations, and so many costly feasts? My dear reader, if you speak so, know that you are not the first. Judas Iscariot, who betrayed Jesus Christ, was the first to express such a sentiment regarding the ointment which Magdalene poured upon His head a little before the Passion; and Judas was reprimanded while the pious woman was praised by the Redeemer. Jesus gives you

the same reproof. And then why do you not curtail the expenses of the theatres, the assembly rooms, evening enjoyments, and the fashions that change in never-ending variety, on all which treasures are squandered, without the poor having a share in them? And do you wish to cramp the churches, the only places the poor can derive any benefit from, because they are open to everyone? And further, we know from history, that when money was spent on churches it was done without so many other expenses, while now what is refused to the church is spent in building spacious barracks for soldiers and carabinieri, and, too often, on new and costly prisons. Let him who wishes, understand.

Examine yourself on your faith in this respect, on the manner in which you reduce it to practice, and on the account you shall have to render to God of your riches; and resolve seriously to amend your life.

Practice.—Make an offering to the church, in proportion with your circumstances.

Ejaculation.—*In ecclesus benedicam te, Domine.* O Lord! in Your churches I will bless Your Holy Nam

CHAPTER VIII.

The Holy Fountain, or the Ninth Apparition.

“I saw water issuing from the temple on the right, and all unto whom this water came, were saved.”

The Holy Church, from Ezechiel, xlvi.

On Thursday, February the 25th, about six o'clock in the morning, according to custom, Bernadette was at her post amid the rocks of Massabielle, surrounded by a vast multitude. Soon the Lady appeared, and ad-

dressed her in these words: "My daughter, I wish to confide to you, and to you alone, as you only does it concern, one last secret, which, like the other two, you will reveal to no person in the world." Bernadette, with feelings of joy unutterable, listened intently to the sweet and tender harmony of her words. After a short silence the Virgin added: "And now go drink and wash yourself at the fountain, and eat of the grass that grows beside it."

At the word *fountain* Bernadette looked around, but there was no fountain there, and there never had been one. Then the little girl, without losing sight of the Virgin, began to proceed, as was natural, to the Gave which flowed near by; but one word and gesture from the Apparition made her stand still.

"Go not there," said the Lady; "I did not tell you to go drink at the Gave, but at the fountain—it is there;" and extending her hand, she pointed out to her with her finger on the right of the Grotto, that very same acclivity, perfectly arid, towards which on the preceding morning she had made her proceed upon her knees. Although nothing in the place pointed out bore any relation to the words spoken by the Lady, still Bernadette obeyed, and on her knees dragged herself along. There against the rock were growing a few tufts of grass of the *Saxifrage* family, which is called *Dorina*. Whether by reason of some new signal of the Apparition, or by some spontaneous movement of her own soul, Bernadette, with that simple faith which is pleasing in the sight of God, stooped down, and scraping up the earth with her little hands, commenced the work of excavation. The spectators wondered much. But lo! soon the bottom of the little hole grows moist

with a mysterious water welling up from an unknown depth from beyond the rocks of the sea, and from below the strata of the earth, and which now spurts up drop by drop beneath the hands of Bernadette, and fills the little hole, which was about the size of a glass. This water mixing with the disturbed soil, was, of course, at first very turbid. Three times did Bernadette attempt to put the muddy liquid to her lips, in order to drink, and as often did her efforts fail. But as she wished to obey the Lady, she tried once again, and, aided by a supernatural power, overcame her repugnance, drank of the water, washed herself with it, and eat a little piece of the wild grass that was growing at the foot of the rock.

At this very moment the water overflowed its little receptacle, and began to run in a very fine vein—more slender, perhaps, than a straw, towards the multitude gathered in front of the Grotto; but soon it was absorbed by the sun, leaving only a moist trace of its existence in the direction of the Gave.

And now that Bernadette had complied with all the orders of the Apparition, the Virgin fixed upon her one look of satisfaction, and then disappeared. The multitude, now that the transfiguration of the child had ended, gathered around her and hurried to the Grotto. Each wished to see for himself the little chink whence the water had sprung, wet his handkerchief with it, and put a drop of it to his lips; so that by this oft repeated action the little spring, whose earthy receptacle was increasing in size, very soon assumed the appearance of puddle, or of a liquid heap of tempered clay. Meanwhile the stream became more abundant, and the opening grew larger insensibly.

“It must be water that flowed from the rocks in time of rain, and which having by chance embedded itself under the soil, was accidentally discovered by the little girl, while scraping up the earth.” So said the scientists of Lourdes when they heard of the fact; and the philosophers were perfectly satisfied with the explanation.

Next day the fountain springing, doubtless, from a mysterious depth by reason of some unknown power, and visibly increasing, discharged itself in a still more powerful issue. It was now running in a streamlet of about the thickness of a finger. Nevertheless, the labor it had to undergo in opening itself a passage through the mould rendered it still muddy. It was only after a few days, having considerably increased meanwhile, that it discontinued enlarging its volume, and became perfectly clear. Then it was flowing from the earth in a stream of about the thickness of a child's arm.

It is needless to say that this is the celebrated Fountain of Lourdes, whose water has wrought so many miracles. M. Lasserre, in 1868, had it measured before his eyes, and calculated that it discharges by the three pipes that have since been put in connection with it, a volume of 85 quarts a minute, and, consequently, 5,100 quarts an hour, and 122,400 quarts a day.

And now, pious reader, place side by side the events that took place during the eighth and ninth apparitions, in order to discover their connection. The Most Holy Virgin causes a fountain, which works wonderful cures, to spring from an acclivity which she made her little innocent child ascend on her knees, exclaiming three times—*Penance*; and she wishes her to eat of the grass that grows beside it, and make the following

MEDITATION.

I. Consider how our Mother, Mary, is indeed, as she is styled in the Litany, *the health of the weak and the comfort of the afflicted*. Oh, what goodness! What condescension in so august a Queen! What love! What compassion for our miseries! Do you believe it? Do you entertain the idea that calling the Most Holy Virgin our Mother is only a certain form of expression, a pious exaggeration not based upon truth? Believe its reality from the effects it produces. Do you not see the works of this Mother? Why do you not, then, have recourse to her in your corporal necessities, with the love and confidence of a child?

II. Consider, moreover, that the Immaculate Virgin Mary is not only the health of the sick, but also *the refuge of sinners*;—nay, more, the refuge of sinners in a most especial manner, because she is more desirous of converting us and making us saints, than she is of healing our corporal afflictions,—for these, when borne with patience, gain for us merit in life eternal, which is our last end and true destiny. And, indeed, she even avails herself of temporal blessings and bodily cures, in order to induce us to hold in high estimation and earnestly pray for the spiritual graces of the soul. How many, in fact, having been healed in body by the water of Lourdes, have been converted, and by the aid of the sacraments cured of spiritual evils? Admire the pious, maternal care manifested by the Immaculate Virgin, and live in such a way as to deserve to be a recipient of her beneficence.

III.—Consider, in fine, that *the surest way* to obtain health of body is to commence to heal the soul by works of penance—that is to say, by a hatred and detestation

of sin, joined with a firm purpose of amending your life by making a good confession, by practicing mortification in eating and drinking, and by curtailing superfluous sleep, diversions and conversations. This did M. Lasserre, who was cured of a desperate disease of the eyes by the water of Lourdes, adopt as a rule of life. How do you feel in this respect? How often you do not even reflect that your soul is sick, and perhaps dead to the grace of God by mortal sin, and still you expect temporal gifts from Him and His Blessed Mother. Remember that before Jesus Christ cured the paralytic mentioned in the Gospel, he said to him: "Son, thy sins are forgiven thee,"—a sign that sin very often is the cause of bodily afflictions and sickness. Know then this truth in order to profit by it.

Practice.—If you are in need of temporal favors from the Madonna of Lourdes, commence, in order to obtain them, to make a good confession and a devout Novena. And if not, recite to-day the Litany for the Sick, who stand so much in want of them.

Ejaculation.—*Mala nostra pelle, bona cuncta posce.* O Immaculate Virgin Mary! drive away our ills, and obtain for us all good things through your most powerful intercession.

CHAPTER IX.

The Immaculate Conception.

"And a great sign appeared in Heaven: A woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars" Apoc. xii. 1.

The same day on which the fountain sprung up a workman of Lourdes, called Louis Bourriette, having

been over twenty years almost blind of his right eye—an affliction occasioned by some terrible mishap, was instantly cured of his malady by an application of this miraculous water. Other cures, equally wonderful, have been wrought by it. Hence it is that although on the following Friday, 26th of February, the Lady did not appear; although the tenth, eleventh and twelfth apparitions took place on the 27th and 28th February and 1st of March, without notably differing from those that had preceded them, Bernadette having gone after the thirteenth apparition, which occurred on Tuesday, the 2d of March, to the Curè of Lourdes, and having told him that the Lady wished a chapel to be built, and processions made to the grotto, he, in consequence of the wonderful things that had taken place, replied: -

“I believe you; but what you ask in the name of the Apparition does not depend from me, but from the Monsignore Bishop, whom I have already made acquainted with all that has happened. I will go inform him of this new request also. To him alone does it belong to take action in the case.”

The fourteenth and fifteenth apparitions took place on Wednesday and Thursday, March 3d and 4th, and differed from the others only in this that an immense gathering of about fifteen or twenty thousand person assembled at the Grotto; and the civil authority was very much discomposed by so large a concourse of people. On that day, the 4th of March, the fortnight asked for by the Virgin, terminated; after which period Bernadette continued her visits to the Grotto, but without experiencing the power of that voice within that used to call her there: she experienced it, however, anew on the morning of the 25th of March, the feast of the Annunciation, and

in compliance with that inward call, she journeyed to the Grotto, full of joy with the hope of seeing the Apparition again. She was scarcely outside of the house when the people began to shout: "Bernadette is going to the Grotto." Soon a great crowd assembled, and accompanied her on the way to the rocks of Massabielle. The Lady soon appeared to the little girl, as on the former occasions.

"Oh my Lady!" Said Bernadette, "be so kind as to tell me who you are, and what your name is?"

The Apparition smiled, but did not reply. Bernadette persisted, saying again: "O my Lady, be so kind as to tell me who you are, and what your name is."

The Apparition seemed to grow more resplendent but answered not yet. Whereupon Bernadette redoubled her solicitations, and repeated a third time, "O my Lady! be so kind as to tell me who you are and what your name is."

The Apparition seemed to become still brighter with beatific splendor, and to be wrapped up, as it were, in its own felicity. Still she remained silent. Bernadette addressed her again in these suppliant words: "O my Lady! I beseech you to be so kind as to tell me who you are, and what your name is."

The Lady had her hands fervently joined, while her face shone with the splendor of infinite beatitude. There was humility in that brightness. At the little girl's last request she unlocked her hands, and passed on to the right arm the corona strung in gold, whose stones were alabaster. Next she extended her arms and inclined them towards the ground, as if to show to the world her virginal hands full of benedictions; and then

elevating them towards the eternal mansions whence, on that day, the Divine messenger of the Annunciation had descended, she joined them again with fervor, and looking on heaven with sentiments of unspeakable gratitude pronounced these words: "I am the Immaculate Conception." Having spoken thus, she disappeared. And Bernadette, who had now certainly for the first time heard these words, used all her powers not to forget them along the road.

"I repeated them to myself all the way," she said, "in order not to forget them;" and at every step she gave, until she had reached the parochial residence, she repeated: Immaculate Conception, Immaculate Conception, because she wished to convey the precise words of the Vision to the Pastor in order that the chapel might be built, as she candidly related.

Behold then the name of this celestial Apparition, so much desired and so often asked for. The Immaculate Conception! One of the great dogmas defined in the nineteenth century—one of the greatest glories of the Sovereign Pontiff, Pius IX. !!! Let us enter into ourselves, and make the following

MEDITATION.

I. Consider the meaning of the words: *I am the Immaculate Conception*. The most holy Virgin did not say: I am Mary Immaculate; nor did she give herself this appellation: I am the conceived without sin; but only, "I am the Immaculate Conception," as if to mark the particular character of this divine privilege. The Immaculate Conception! Always pure—always fair—always spotless! Never tarnished by even the smallest stain—never, by the slightest blemish—never, by even the

shadow of sin! Never in disgrace with God; always in favor with him. Never under the dominion of the devil; always in body, and soul, and heart united to God in strictest friendship. What a mystery! How honorable—how glorious for Mary! And, dear reader, do we sufficiently appreciate this privilege of Mary? Do we endeavor to draw near to her, no matter how great the intervening distance, by a faithful practice of the virtue of purity, by flying from the occasions of sin, and by keeping our consciences unsullied?

II. Consider the *motives* that induced Mary to call herself the Immaculate Conception, which, as far as we poor ignorant creatures can conjecture, are the following: first, because in 1858, this was the most recently defined dogma of the Catholic Church, having been pronounced on the 8th of December, 1854. Did not Mary wish thereby to notify us of our obligation of keeping ourselves in strictest union with the Church, by believing and professing all that she believes and teaches? Ah! what a beautiful confirmation of the Definition pronounced by Pope Pius IX. four years previous! Second, because this is the dogma which best combats the errors of the present time, namely: Rationalism and Naturalism, which rest upon that diabolical pride by reason of which the world now-a-days flatters itself with the belief that it can act and speak from itself, aided only by natural reason and worldly wisdom, and needing not at all divine and supernatural assistance. "Man," exclaims the world, now, "is self-sufficient, and needs not God." But Mary says, "I am the Immaculate Conception:" that is to say, I am she whom God has preserved from original sin, by reason of which all men come into the world weak, ignorant, and incapable of knowing of themselves alone the true

religion, and of saving their souls. Poor, haughty slaves of the devil and sin, what do you believe yourselves to be? Is not all this true?

III. Consider the *duties* which this title of Mary imposes upon mankind. First, it requires of them a true, entire, firm and lively faith in all the dogmas of religion, because all are equally certain, having been defined by the Church. Second, it demands of them to abhor from their inmost soul the pernicious errors of the times, namely: Rationalism, and all its attendant consequences. Human reason is not enough of itself alone; it needs the supernatural aid of divine Revelation, as well as the grace of God, which supports human weakness and elevates humanity to the supernatural order. Third, it calls upon them in a special manner to practice holy Christian humility—a virtue which teaches man to know himself, not to be proud of any talents he may possess, but to entertain a poor opinion of his thoughts, no matter how sublime, of his words, however eloquent, and of his works, however great. Do you comply with these obligations? Examine your thoughts, words, and actions, and effect a radical change in your life.

Practice.—Recite the Corona of the Immaculate Conception.

Ejaculation.—O Mary, conceived without sin, pray for us who have recourse to thee!

CHAPTER X.

The Ecstasy and the Salutation, or the last two Apparitions.

“Turn away thy eyes from me, for they have made me flee away.”
Cant. vi. 4.

After the 25th of March, the day on which the beautiful Lady had made known her most sweet name, Bernadette did not feel within her the wonted voice and impelling power that used to invite her to the Grotto, and this was a sign that the Lady would not manifest herself again until Easter Monday, the 5th of April. On that morning Bernadette hurried on to the Grotto, followed by an immense crowd; and soon Mary Immaculate revealed herself to the daughter of the miller. During this apparition, the last but one, a most extraordinary event occurred.

The wax torch which Bernadette had brought with her, and which was no doubt a present, was very large, and she rested it upon the ground, supporting it by the extremity between her hands half joined. The Virgin appeared. And lo! the seer having by an instinctive movement of worship fallen down in ecstasy before that Immaculate Beauty, raised her hands a little, and let them rest quietly, and without any reflection on her part, upon the lighted end of the torch. And now the flame passed through her fingers, and flickered above them in the gentle breeze. Meanwhile, Bernadette remained immovable and rapt in heavenly contemplation, and did not perceive the phenomenon which was the wonder of the multitude. The eye-witnesses trod upon each other in their anxiousness to obtain a better view. There were present John Louis Foucarde, Mar-

tinou, Estrade, Callet, the forest guard (*guarda foreste*), the Misses Tard'hivail, and a hundred others besides. From the very first Dr. Dozous had kept his watch before his eyes, and testified that this wonderful occurrence had lasted over a quarter of an hour.

Soon a slight tremor passes over Bernadette's person. The ecstatic rapture that had lit up her countenance, fades away. The Vision had vanished, and the little girl was once more in her natural state. People examined her hands, but nothing unusual was the matter. The flame had respected the flesh of the little seer rapt in ecstasy before Mary. The multitude declared it to be a miracle. But one of the spectators wishing to test it, took the lighted torch, and without attracting Bernadette's attention, placed it in contact with her hand. "Ah! sir," she exclaimed, at the same time withdrawing her hand, "you burn me!"

This event was rumored very much about, and the journal of Lourdes, *Il Lavedau*, spoke of it thus: "Bernadette, as an eye-witness tells us, being in ecstasy, had her hand for a long time in contact with the flame of a torch, without experiencing the slightest pain. You can well imagine that the people declared it to be a miracle." How candid this last reflection! Wait and see if it was not right for the people to proclaim the fact miraculous, inexplicable as it was on natural grounds.

It was on this very day, 5th of April, that the Syndic of Lourdes had his agents placed on all the highways and byways, to count the number that might pay a visit to the Grotto. There were on that day 9,060 persons—4,822 from Lourdes and 4,238 strangers. (*Archivio Municipale di Lourdes. Lettera del Sindaco al Prefetto, No. 86.*) And still the people had not anticipated

Bernadette's visit, as was their custom during the fifteen days. They did not know that she had gone to the Grotto. We need not wonder, then, that during the fortnight a number of more than 20,000 persons, is calculated to have visited the rocks of Massabielle.

This extraordinary concourse of people disturbed the civil authority. The Commissary of Police, the Syndic, the Imperial Procurator, referred the case several times to the Prefect, and he, to the Minister of Grace and Justice of Napoleon III.; and the matter made such headway, as we shall mention in the second part of this book, that the Grotto was fenced in, guards were placed around, and suits entered against those who went there to pray.

Hence we find that the last apparition, which was not until the 16th of July, the Feast of Carmel, took place in a different manner from the others. Bernadette, not being able to go to the Grotto, passed along the right bank of the Gave (just opposite), into the Savy meadows, whither the people flocked after the prohibition. There they were in front of the Grotto, although the river flowed between.

On that day Bernadette felt within her a voice inviting her to go, not to the rocks of Massabielle, but to the opposite side of the Gave; and she went there about eight o'clock in the evening. As soon as she had knelt, and had commenced the Rosary, the Most Holy Mother of Jesus Christ appeared to her. The Gave, which separated her from the Grotto, was some way concealed from her ecstatic sight. Before her she saw only the blessed rocks, which seemed as near to her now as ever before, and the Immaculate Virgin, who smiled sweetly on her, as if to confirm the past and illumine the future.

Not a word passed her heavenly lips. A little later, she bowed her head to the girl, as if to bid her a long, or a last farewell: after which she disappeared, and returned to her mansion beyond the skies.

This was the time, perhaps, that a certain lady, astonished at seeing this poor little shepherdess make her salutations with so much grace and dignity at the termination of her ecstasies, said to her: "But, Bernadette, who has taught you to bow so gracefully?" "No one," replied she, lost in wonder. "I do not know how I have saluted; but I know I should do everything as the Lady does; and she salutes me in that way when she is about to depart."

This was the eighteenth and last apparition.

And now, having seen the ecstatic felicity Bernadette experienced at the feet of the Virgin, let us enter into ourselves, and make the following

MEDITATION ON THE HAPPINESS OF ONE WHO IS TRULY
DEVOUT TO MARY.

I. Consider that even as Bernadette was happy in the presence of the Immaculate Virgin, so, also, is every one who is truly *devoted* to her. Like Bernadette, such a one cares not for the things of earth. Occupied with the love of the Queen of Heaven, what earthly thing can engage the affections of his heart? Can riches? He has with him her who says: "With me are riches." Can honors? He is the son of her who has been exalted above the choirs of angels, and seated upon a lofty throne beside that of God. Can pleasures, though lawful? He refers them all to the glory of his Queen. Can unlawful pleasures? He knows that they displease his Immaculate Mother, and, therefore, shuns them, aye,

even the most remote occasion of them, with all his power. Wherefore, not having his heart placed on the things of this earth, he participates not of their instability. Poverty, humiliations, mortifications and sufferings, while they spare him not, do not conquer, debase, or deject him. * * * Dear reader, have you seriously reflected on this? Would you not, by devoutly meditating on these truths, have been spared the greater part of your tribulations?

II. Consider how one truly devoted to Mary, like Bernadette, has *his senses, his heart and his soul*, ravished by the sweetness of his beloved Queen. In the heavens above, and on the earth beneath, he sees nothing but Mary Immaculate. The sun says to him: "Mary is bright as the sun." The moon: "She is beautiful as the moon." The stars:—they crown her august brow the aurora when rising, reflects her graces; the lofty trees declare her majesty: like a cedar am I exalted on *Libanus*; the lily bespeaks her purity. In a word, all his thoughts and affections are directed to her. If he thinks of his worldly affairs, if he loves persons with whom he may be connected in any way, all the yearnings of his nature are directed to his Lady and Mother. What a beautiful way to live! Have you experienced its happiness? Enter into yourself and think.

III. Consider how the felicity of such a one increases while in *expectancy of life eternal*. While here below, he cannot love this good Mother perfectly: above, his love will be perfect. * * * No more fear of losing her: absolute certainty of enjoying her company forever. * * If the apparition of the Virgin here below, inebriated the heart of Bernadette with so much felicity, that, while in her august presence, she could attend to nothing be-

side—nay, that she was insensible even to the flame of the torch that flickered through her fingers. * * * If, even to this day, her mind is full of the sweet impressions then produced, and her heart becomes enamored as she looks back in thought to those by-gone hours—oh! what will be her happiness in heaven? * * * * If, moreover, St. Francis of Assisi could say: “So great is the glory I expect that any suffering in this life is a pleasure to me,” is it not true that anyone who is truly devoted to Mary, feels happy in the hope of life eternal, where he shall ever enjoy the company of this most amiable, most sweet, and most loving Mother?

Examine your heart well upon the importance you usually attach to devotion to the Virgin Mary. If you do not feel that tender passion, endeavor to acquire it; and if you have it to some extent, strive to make it perfect.

Practice.—Fast once, or practice some mortification in order to obtain from God and the Virgin Mary the grace of true devotion.

Ejaculation.—O Mary Immaculate, through the love of Jesus Christ, obtain for me true devotion!

CHAPTER XI.

The Two Missed Apparitions.

“Behold He standeth behind our wall.” Cant. ii. 9.

Having finished the history of the eighteen apparitions of the Immaculate Virgin at the Holy Grotto of Lourdes, let us turn our attention to the *two* apparitions so anxiously expected by Bernadette during the fortnight’s visits asked for by the Most Holy Virgin.

Our readers will recollect that in the third apparition, which took place on the 18th of February, the mysterious Lady of the Grotto invited Bernedette to visit there for a term of fifteen days, and that she promised to do so. Whereupon the Lady pledged herself to make her happy—not, indeed, in this world, but in the next.

It is certainly true that by having given this invitation to the girl, the Lady was not bound to make herself visible during the whole fortnight; still it seemed natural to suppose that she would manifest herself. And yet, on two occasions, namely, Monday, the 22d of February, and the following Friday, she did not appear; thereby causing poor little Bernadette extreme pain.

On the 22d of February especially, the little girl suffered extreme anguish. The previous day the Commissary of Police had her brought before him, and threatened her with the severest penalties in case she should go again to the Grotto. He said he would have herself and her parents arrested by the Caribinieri if she went there, and, in fine, issued a formal prohibition to that effect: a prohibition which was confirmed by her parents, and by the Sisters to whom she went to school. The latter treated her harshly, and regarded her as an imposter. The school-girls jeered at her as if she was a vain, sacrilegious wretch, who wished to be reputed a saint. * * * Nevertheless, the Lady had extended to her an invitation for a fortnight, and as yet only three days had elapsed, so she felt herself obliged to pay the visits according to promise. What was she to do in this perplexity? Could she disobey her parents and her other superiors? She had never been guilty

of a single act of disobedience, and she did not wish to commit such a crime now. * * * Again, to be unfaithful to her word pledged to the Lady—ah! that caused her anguish beyond endurance. Still she did not go at the usual hour to the Grotto. She went to school at the proper time, and felt sad and melancholy the whole morning.

About noon it was customary for the girls to leave school for dinner, and Bernadette, distracted between the two extremes of the situation, walked homeward in sorrow. The church-bell was now tolling the *Angelus*.

At that very moment a strange power suddenly took possession of her, acting like an invisible arm, not upon her soul, but upon her body, and impelling her on towards the Grotto, not roughly nor violently, but with a sweetness irresistible. She obeyed this resistless, impellent force. And now she began to smile, and became jubilant with the thought that the mysterious Lady would again appear to her, and chase away all her sorrows. Poor child! She did not know that the Spirit of God breathes wherever He wills. * * * Before she arrived at the Grotto the unseen force began to relax—different from the other occasions on which, having reached the same point, it seemed to impel her with redoubled power, and to support her as she walked.

Nevertheless, she succeeded in reaching the Grotto. Many not having seen her arrive at the usual hour in the morning, returned home. Still a considerable number remained. The little girl, as was her custom, humbly knelt and began her Rosary, keeping her eyes fixed on the niche. The crowd, regarding her attentively, were anxiously awaiting the moment of her transfiguration. A long time passed away in expectancy. Berna-

dette continued to pray—manifesting, however, no sign of the presence of the Vision. Heaven, like the world, seemed to be rejecting her, and to have become deaf to her prayers: the Lady appeared not.

“Oh! why do you not come?” said the little girl.
“Oh! why abandon me?”

The people, looking confused, overwhelmed her with interrogatories. And she replied, her eyes at the same time red from weeping: “To-day the Lady has not appeared to me; I have seen nothing.”

Some of the people said to her: “You should understand now, poor little child, that it was all an illusion, and that there never was anything real there. You are the victim of imagination.” * * * “And in good earnest,” added others, “if the Lady appeared yesterday, why not appear to-day?” * * * “Nevertheless,” insisted the little girl, “on the other occasions I saw her as I now see you, and she and I spoke together. But to-day she is not here, and I do not know the reason.” * * * “Nonsense!” exclaimed a certain sceptic, “the Commissary of Police has produced the effect he desired, and you will see that all is finished. ‘At the desire of the king, God has forbidden the working of miracles here.’”*

The believers amongst the assembled people, were much afflicted in heart. Bernadette wept and prayed. She examined her innocent conscience, to see if there lurked therein any sin that might render her unworthy of seeing the Lady, but could discover none. She wished to devise means whereby the Lady might be induced

* “È da parte del re a Dio proibito
Di miracoli fare in questo sito.”

to re-appear, but failed in the effort. Still all hope of seeing her again had not vanished—one tiny beam of that heavenly light still shone upon her heart; and, as we have already seen, this faithful little mountain maid was honored with twelve more visions, to the shame and confusion of the unbelieving scoffers.

Let us pass unnoticed the rashness and audacity of these sceptics, who said: “Why would not the Lady appear to-day if she did appear yesterday?” Ignorant worms of the earth! what can you know of the reasons that guide heavenly action? Who can demand of God the reason of His line of conduct? Can man’s short-sightedness penetrate into the depths of the inscrutable decrees of Infinite Wisdom? * * * And now, while adoring the disposings of Divine Providence, let us with humility seek the reasons, on the grounds of convenience, which may probably be the cause why the Immaculate Virgin did not manifest herself on these two days of the fortnight’s visits asked of Bernadette. These, according to our opinion, can be the three following :

1st. The non-appearance of the Virgin served to determine Bernadette’s parents to grant her a new permission to visit the Grotto, for they feared they had displeased the Lady by their prohibition: 2d. It tested the faith of those who did believe, and thus rendered it more meritorious, and more certain; because if Bernadette had been a cunning deceiver, would she have confessed that the Lady did not appear to her on these two occasions? and further, if she had been deceived herself on the other occasions, why would she not be now also deluded? 3d. The best reason why the Most Holy Virgin did not appear on the two occasions in question, is that she wished to keep her daughter hum-

ble ; and she certainly needed the virtue of humility. Favored before the eyes of all with the most miraculous visions—commissioned to bear a heavenly message to the ministers of the true God, this childlike little soul, until now so tranquil and solitary, finds herself suddenly transported into the midst of a vast multitude, and countless agitations. Hers it was to stand up a living sign against the contradictions of one party, and the threats of another ; against the scoffs of many, and, what to her was fraught with still more danger, the enthusiastic admiration of a still greater number. Ah ! yes ; the time was drawing nigh when vast multitudes would sound her praises, and contend in holy strife for every shred of her garments, as for so many holy relics of a saint. Yes, the time was nigh when persons eminent for intellectual and social standing, would prostrate themselves before her to ask her blessing ;—and, indeed, this did happen some time after. And now, in such circumstances, what would have become of her and her humility ? Might she not have taken vain pleasure in the extraordinary gifts which heaven had given her in such profusion ? Might she not have become a wreck to vanity and pride ?

On the contrary, by not appearing on these two occasions the Holy Virgin gave her to understand that the favors of which she was the recipient, were divine largesses altogether beyond her reach. By allowing her to weep and pray, regardless at the same time of the supplications she poured forth in order to induce the vision to appear, Mary Immaculate gave her to understand that when she did manifest herself, as well as when she did not, it was all an act of her own pure bounty, to which the little girl could not lay claim as a right.

Admire here, dear reader, the wonderful dispositions of divine providence, always adorable, not always comprehensible, still always beneficent ; and make the following

MEDITATION ON HUMILITY.

I. Consider the *essence of humility*. Humility is that virtue which moderates the desire of self-excellence, that is to say, of honors. 1st. The proud man says in words or in acts, that he has not received from any one the gifts of nature, of fortune, or of grace which he happens to possess ; the humble man, on the contrary, admits that any good he does possess, he has received from God. 2d. The proud man, if at other times he confesses he he has received any favor from God, attributes the reception of it to his own merits ; the humble man, on the contrary, acknowledges he has received all from God, without having at all merited those benefactions. 3d. The proud man believes he has gifts which in reality he has not ; the humble man, knowing his own nothingness, recognises no gift but what he really has in his possession. 4th. The proud man, believing himself better than others, looks upon them with a disparaging eye ; the humble man, on the contrary, respects every one, for he does not consider himself better than they. Reflect, dear reader. Are you proud ? * * * or are you humble ?

II. Consider the *gravity of the vice of pride, and the excellence of the virtue of humility*. 1st. Pride is the beginning of all sin, as the Holy Spirit says : “ *Initium omnis peccati est superbia*” (Ecl. x. 15). On the other hand, humility is the beginning and foundation of every virtue. 2d. Pride, with few exceptions, is the most heinous of all vices, because it withdraws a man far from God, not through love of riches or pleasures, not through ignor-

ance and fragility, as is the case with other vices, but through a spirit of rebellion which will not submit to God and His holy law, as St. Thomas teaches. On the other hand, humility is the most excellent of virtues because it attracts a man to yield a ready submission to God and His holy law. 3d. Pride is the most dangerous of all vices, for, as St. Gregory teaches, while others destroy only their opposite virtues—as, for example, anger destroys patience, this annihilates every virtue, because by refusing to God the glory that is His due, it impels a man to the practice of virtue merely through self-love. On the contrary, humility is the most useful of all virtues, because it refers them all to God, and guards and protects them. * * * Have you ever reflected seriously on these things? Perhaps it is because of your pride that your heart is sullied with so many vices, and adorned with so few virtues!

III. Consider the *means* of acquiring humility, which are chiefly five. 1st. We must beg it fervently of God and the Blessed Virgin. 2d. We ought to meditate frequently on the many examples of this virtue which are met with in the lives of Jesus, of Mary, and the Saints. 3d. We ought to consider our own absolute nothingness, recalling to mind the words of St. Paul: “*What hast thou that thou hast not received? And if thou hast received, why dost thou glory, as if thou hadst not received it?*” (1. Cor. iv. 7): and the words of the Holy Spirit: “*Why is earth and ashes proud?*” (Eccl. x. 9). 4th. We should recall to mind the chastisements with which God has ever punished the proud, and will continue to punish them, as St. James the Apostle writes: “*God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble.*” (Jas. iv. 6): and also these words of the Holy Spirit: “*He that hold-*

eth pride shall be filled with maledictions, and it shall ruin him in the end" (Eccl. x. 15). 5th. We might reflect, too, on the odium with which the world treats the proud, and the high esteem in which it holds the humble; so that even here below the words of our Divine Savior in the Gospel are verified: "He that exalts himself shall be humbled, and he that humbles himself shall be exalted."

Examine your conscience diligently, and make this most important of meditations the subject of frequent thought.

Practice.—Speak not this day a single word in praise or dispraise of yourself; and on no account let fall a word to the disadvantage of your neighbor.

Ejaculation.—Jesus and Mary, grant me the virtue of humility.

CHAPTER XII.

The Beauty of Mary Immaculate.

"Thou art all fair, O my love, and there is not a spot in thee."
(Cant. iv. 7).

We cannot bring this first part of our book to a close without speaking of the beauty of the Apparition of the Grotto of Lourdes, that is of the Most Holy Immaculate Virgin. Therefore, we will reproduce M. Lasserre's magnificent description.

"Bernadette said, 'when the Lady appears I begin first by seeing a brilliant light which illuminates the Grotto, and next I see her; while on the contrary, when the Vision disappears, it is the Lady first withdraws herself from my sight, and next the light fades

away.' And now, this ineffable light which bathed with its effulgence the Lady's person, did not dazzle or wound the eyes like the rays of the sun; on the contrary, though brilliant as they, it was tranquil in its influence as a profound shade, and attracted the gaze with a resistless power, at the same time affording it a delicious repose. It was like the morning starlight in all its freshness. There was nothing undefined, or vapor-like in the apparition. It had not the changing delineations of a fanciful vision; it was a living reality, a human body, palpable to the eye as our bodies are, and differing from them only in its brilliancy and divine loveliness.

“The Lady was of middle size. She looked very young, and had the grace of a woman of twenty years. But without losing any of its tender sweetness this splendor, fleeting in earthly creatures, bore in her an eternal character. Nay, in her person the successive beauties of the four stations of life, blended harmoniously with her divine loveliness. The innocent candor of the child, the spotless purity of the virgin, the tender gravity of motherhood, and a wisdom superior to that of all ages—all were centered in the miraculous face of the Lady. To what can I liken her in this fallen world, where the rays of the beautiful are distorted and obscured by impure mixtures? Every image, every paragon, no matter how excellent, would fall far short of this matchless type. No majesty in the universe, no worldly rank, no simplicity of character here below can give an idea of her, or aid one in better comprehending her. It is not with lamp-light that the stars of heaven are seen, or illumined.

“The regularity and ideal purity of the expression of

her countenance, where nothing stood in jarring contract, baffle description. Is it necessary to say that her face was of an oval curve of infinite beauty, that her eyes were blue, and so delicious in expression that their calm radiance seemed to penetrate the heart of the beholder? Need I say that her lips breathed a divine sweetness? that on her forehead supreme wisdom with virtue without limit, sat enthroned?

“Her garments, made out of some unknown material, and woven, no doubt, in that mysterious work-shop in which the lily of the valley receives its adornment, were white as the spotless snows of the mountains, and more magnificent in their simplicity than the splendid robes of Solomon in his glory. Her gown was long and bore a train, which being chastely tucked up revealed her feet as they rested on the rock, and lightly pressed the branches of the wild rose-bush. On each foot of virginal whiteness budded forth a mystic rose of gold.

“In front a sky-blue girdle knotted around her waist, extended in two long streamers to her feet; while a white veil fixed around her head and enveloping, in its ample width, her shoulders and arms, descended to the extremity of her dress behind.

“She wore no ring, no necklace, no diadem, no jewels, none of those ornaments with which human vanity is wont to decorate itself. A Rosary, whose stones were white as drops of milk, and whose chain was of gold, hung from her hands joined in fervor. The decades were passing through her fingers. The lips of this Queen of Virgins moved not during the first and the second apparition. Instead of reciting the Rosary, she was perhaps, listening in her own heart to the eternal echo of the Angelic Salutation, and to the mighty murmur of

invocations addressed to her from earth. Every little stone she touched was, no doubt, fraught with a shower of heavenly grace that descended upon souls, even as the pearly dew-drops fall upon the flowers."

Bernadette having been asked to describe the beauty of the Lady, gave such answers as, if failing in precise portraiture, at least furnished a faint picture from which to imagine its excellence.

M. Di Ressèguier, Counsellor-General and Ancient Deputy of the Low Pyrenees, having come to visit her, accompanied by many ladies of his household, asked her if the Lady of the Grotto was as pretty as any of them. Bernadette glanced around, and then with a look depicted on her countenance that seemed to under value the assembled beauties when placed in contrast with this peerless Queen, said: "Oh! she was far more beautiful than these ladies." Now, *these ladies* were the flower of society in Pau.

Regarding the apparent age of the Lady, M. Lasserre says that she had the grace of a young woman of twenty years. M. Count Lafond, in his book entitled "*La Salette, Lourdes e Pontmain, voyage d'un croyant,*" writes upon the matter thus: "From Bernadette's account, we believe that Mary appeared in tender age, when there was not yet question for her of the more advanced years required for motherhood, such as she is depicted at Rome in that beautiful fresco in the convent of the Trinità del Monte, before which Pius IX. said on the 2d. October, 1846: "It is a pious thought to have the Madonna represented at an age in which she seemed to have been forgotten."

Certainly Bernadette could say with Dante :

“La bellezza ch’io vidi si trasmoda
Non pur di lá da noi, ma certo io credo
Che solo it suo Fattor tutta la goda.” (Parad. xxx).

“——Mine eyes did look
On beauty, such, as I believe in sooth
Not merely to exceed our human; but
That save its Maker none can to the full
Enjoy it.” (REV. H. F. CARY.)

A few years ago M. Count Lafond, accompanied by a priest, went with the Bishop’s permission to Nevers, to have an interview with Bernadette. One reply she made during the conversation, is also very illustrative of the beauty of the Holy Virgin, as she appeared at Lourdes.

“I have come from Lourdes,” said the priest to her “and have seen P. Hermann and M. Lasserre, both of whom have there obtained the cure of their eyes.”

Sister Mary Bernard, for such is now Bernadette’s name in religion, opened her large eyes, which till now she had kept modestly cast down. * * * “I have seen the statue they have placed in the Grotto,” added the priest, “it has its hands joined in this way: is it so that the Holy Virgin appeared to you?”

“Yes, sir,” she replied; “but when she said to me: ‘I am the Immaculate Conception,’ she did this”—— Whereupon she made a gesture so beautiful, so noble, so graceful, that both these gentlemen were moved to tears. It seemed to them, writes the Count Lafond, that they then beheld a living copy of the Queen of Heaven as she appeared amid the Rocks of Massabielle.

A certain lady of Nevers asked her one day if she had seen the Virgin Mary any more after the eighteenth apparition? A flood of tears was her only reply. We

can well understand how much she desires to quit this earth in order to see once again the Immaculate; and we understand, too, how beautiful, divinely beautiful, is the Most Holy Virgin, who has so much enamored her.

Wherefore, dear reader, enter into yourself, and make the following

MEDITATION ON THE BEAUTY OF THE VIRGIN MARY.

I. *Consider what history tells us of the beauty of Mary.* St. Epiphanius, as recorded by Nicephorus, has left us a sweet picture of the Virgin. This picture, executed in the fourth century upon traditions that have since died out, and on manuscripts that have not come down to our times, is therefore the only reliable one left us. The Virgin, according to this holy bishop, was not tall of stature, although she was still a little above the middle height. Her complexion, like that of Sulamitis, was slightly browned by the sun of her native land, and possessed all the beautiful gradations of ripe corn ears. Her hair was blonde; her eyes were quick and sparkling, and in color a little inclined to the olive hue; her eyebrows were black, and perfectly curved; her nose was well shaped and aquiline; her lips were ruddy as the rose; her face was in shape oval; her hands and fingers were long. The holy fathers rival each other in describing the admirable beauty of the Holy Virgin. St. Dionysius, the Areopagite, whose testimony is of the greatest weight, inasmuch as he saw the Blessed Virgin on earth, says that her beauty was so dazzling and attractive that he would have worshipped her as a goddess, had he not known that there was only one God. And you, Christian reader, are attracted by the imperfect and fallen beauties of this world.

II. Consider what the *Holy Bible* tells us of the beauties of Mary. On mature reflection you will needs say that the Eternal Wisdom having conceived this beautiful creature in His divine mind, and, as it were, wishing to give expression to the infinite love He bears her, has taken a special delight in filling the Holy Scriptures with epithets descriptive of her excellence. Hence, does He predict her by the mouths of His Prophets as the Mother of the Redeemer, the figure in the virgin clay from which Adam was formed. She is styled the ark, which alone rode buoyant over the waters of the deluge; the ladder of Jacob; the burning bush; the closed garden; the sealed fountain; the gate open only to the Most High; the privileged amongst all women. And again is she symbolized in all the beauties of nature: in the cedar of Libanus; in the cypress of Zion; the palm of Cades; the olive of the plains; the plane-tree by the water side; the lily blooming among thorns; the rose of Jericho; the ointment of sweetest fragrance; the dove without spot; the vine rich in fruit-bearing; the morning star beaming with brightness. She is called beautiful as the moon, bright as the sun, sweet to look upon as the varicolored rainbow, pure as a spotless mirror. And again, describing her hands, eyes, face, cheeks, teeth, mouth, neck, hair, the Divine Creator becomes enamored, if we may use the expression, with her beauty and grace, and exclaims: Oh! how beautiful thou art, my love, my spouse, my sister, my dove, my pearl, my delight. Oh! how beautiful art thou! Thou art all fair, and there is no spot in thee. Thou art so beautiful that thou hast wounded my heart; and to such an extent that I who am the King of Glory, am all enamored with thy loveliness: "And the King shall

greatly desire thy beauty, for He is the Lord thy God." (Psalm. XLIV). * * * Meditate, dear reader. * * * This beauty, more than human, is for you also. You can, by anticipation, enjoy it in this life by the practice of virtue; but especially and completely in the next. * * * Is your heart still fixed on the world?

III. Consider how all this excellence is still as nothing: all the glory and beauty of this heavenly Queen is from within, as the Holy Spirit says: "*All the glory of the King's daughter is within.*" (Psalm XLIV). All we have said above is a portraiture only of Mary's external beauty; but her true loveliness, and glory, and adornment, are from within, and exist in her heart and soul which are full of the grace of God, and are enriched with such rare virtues that could they be seen by corporal eyes, would enkindle in the hearts of men a more ardent fire of love than all her external attractions. Reflect, therefore, dear reader, upon her sanctity so amiable, and so much esteemed, even by the angels—upon the graces she had in this life, and the glory with which God has crowned her in heaven. Keep before your mind's eye this *great prodigy*, as the Apostle and Evangelist, St. John, calls her—that is to say, this *peerless woman, clothed with the sun, having the moon under her feet, and a crown of twelve stars around her head*, and then say if it is not worth your while in order to merit her love, to renounce the riches, honors and pleasures of this world by becoming truly devoted to her.

Practice.—Make with holy Job, a compact with yourself never more to think of persons or things that may cause you to fall into sin.

Ejaculation.—Mother of my Jesus, Mother of love, to you do I consecrate my heart!

PART II.

THE TRIALS OF THE WORK OF GOD AT LOURDES.

INTRODUCTION.

The reader who has accompanied us thus far, when scanning this history for the first time, will certainly ask us, as he has a right to do, "Is all this true? Are these apparitions real or imaginary? Do they rest on solid proofs?" And the faithful Catholic will add: "Has the Church spoken regarding this subject? And what has she said?"

These are very reasonable questions, and we purpose answering them in this second part of our book, in which we shall see the works of God combatting all kinds of opposition, and finally triumphing over them all.

CHAPTER I.

The Opposition of Good Faith.

"Your service is reasonable." Rom. XII. 1.

Scarcely had the news of the apparitions at the Grotto of Massabielle spread abroad, till the inhabitants of Lourdes and the surrounding towns were divided into three classes regarding them; and they may be arranged in the following order: 1st. The class that, all at once, believed the apparitions to be real, supernatural and divine; and we need scarcely say that this comprised the women, the simple, and the illiterate. 2d. The class of persons who denied the reality of the apparitions

in toto, and even their possibility: and these were the Free Thinkers. 3d. There was another class who neither denied nor admitted their reality at the outset, but waited patiently for proofs sufficiently strong to enable them to pronounce prudent judgment upon them; and these were the well instructed and learned Christians.

Let us pass by the first, for there is no reason why we should tarry with them. We shall reserve the second for the following chapter, and speak now of the third class whom we designate with this title: "*The Opposition Party of Good Faith.*" And in this class we number: 1st. The parents of Bernadette; 2d. Her teachers and companions; 3d. Dr. Dozous, and many other gentlemen; 4th. The rest of the well instructed people of Lourdes, and of the neighboring towns, excepting the Clergy, of whom we shall speak separately.

In the first place then, regarding the parents of Bernadette, we know that the mother, Louise Soubirous, shrugged her shoulders by way of negative, as soon as she heard what her daughter and the other girls related, on their return home, regarding the first apparitions. Addressing her daughter she said: "You are deceived; there was nothing there. You thought you saw something, but you have seen nothing. They are only the imaginings of foolish little girls." Accordingly, partly because she did not believe, partly because she feared that the girls might fall into the river, and partly, too, through a dread that it might be some evil spirit that had appeared, she strictly forbade her daughter to go there again. Bernadette's father and sister, Mary, were of the same opinion. Nevertheless, this prohibition, though often renewed, was as often withdrawn; for having seen the girl in ecstasy, the fountain gush forth, and

the wonderful cures effected by its waters, they believed.

In the second place, we notice Bernadette's teachers and companions in school. The teachers to whom Bernadette went to school were the Sisters of Charity and Instruction of Névers, who had also charge of the hospital of Lourdes. These ladies, whether because engaged in their daily avocations, or because of the prohibition of the Curè, had never visited the Grotto, and consequently had never seen Bernadette in ecstasy ; wherefore they doubted the reality of the visions from the very first. Nay, they added their formal prohibition to that of her parents ; told her that there was nothing real seen by her, and that either her head was addle, or that she was telling lies. One of them, suspecting imposture in a case so grave and holy, treated her with much severity, and regarded the whole scene of events as pure deception. "Naughty little girl," she said, you are making a very unseemly carnival in the holy season of Lent." Others accused her of wishing herself to be reputed a saint, and of practicing a sacrilegious joke. And to all these bitter reproofs and humiliations to which she was subjected, was added the mockery of some of her school-mates

Then it was that the Most Holy Virgin sustained her child ; and after a little the Nuns themselves, illuminated by the wonders that happened around, not only believed the veracious testimony of this heaven-favored girl, and treated her with fondness, but even took her into their convent, and she is at present residing in their mother house at Névers.

In the third place, we must mention Dr. Dozous, who by the providence of God, happened to be near Bernadette during the whole period of the apparitions. This

gentleman, well skilled in medicine, endowed with prudence, and perfectly disinterested, undertook the study of the case with a marked and particular industry. He was almost always present at the apparitions, and studied them with all the skill of his profession. At first, indeed, he was incredulous himself; but having been convinced by evidence, he believed firmly, and regardless of human respect, published in testimony of his belief a book, entitled: "*La Grotte de Lourdes, sa fontaine e ses guerisons,*" to which he put by way of epigraph the words: *I have believed because I have seen; and therefore have I spoken.* And so of others; for example, M. Estrade, receiver of indirect revenues at Lourdes, M. Dufo and many other members of the bar; M. Pougat, President of the Tribunal, the Commander of the Garrison, and several others besides believed because they had witnessed her ecstasies.

In the fourth place, we state that the rest of the instructed people of Lourdes were at first incredulous regarding the apparitions; but all of them who happened to have been present at the ecstasies of Bernadette, on seeing her illuminated face and heaven-directed movements, were soon convinced of the truth of the apparitions themselves; and in their simplicity introduced a similitude, plain indeed, but very appropriate: "In our valleys the sun is slow to show himself because he is hidden on the east by the peaks of the Gers mountains. But long before we see him we can descry in the west, the reflection of his rays on the mountains of Basturguères, which are lit up with his effulgence while we are still in shade; and yet, although we do not see the sun directly, but only his reflection on the steaps, we are, nevertheless, certain of his pres-

ence behind the lofty mountains of the Gers. Basturguères, say we, sees the sun; and did we occupy such an elevated position, we too would see him. Is it not so? The same phenomenon has place when we fix our eyes on Bernadette illumined by the invisible apparition; the certainty is the same, and the evidence similar. The face of the seer becomes suddenly so bright, so superhumanly transfigured, so impregnated with divine rays, that we assert with certainty, by reason of the brilliancy of Bernadette's face which we see, the presence of the illumining centre which we do not see. And did we not have a mountain of sin, and wretchedness, and wordly distractions, and carnal obtuseness to hide from us its presence; did we stand on a height parallel with the spiritual elevation of this innocent maiden—this pure snow-drop which no human touch has ever sullied, we too would see this illumining body not by mere reflection, but directly as she sees it when in ecstasy."

It is in this way then, namely, by contemplating Bernadette transfigured, or by witnessing the wonderful events that happened at the Grotto, or the miracles wrought by the water of Lourdes, that the opposition party of good faith were convinced; and, indeed, all ought to be, as we shall better see when speaking of miracles.

We must remark here, that though we maintain that all men of good faith should stand convinced of the reality of the apparitions of the Immaculate Virgin at Lourdes, we do not intend to insinuate an obligation like to that imposed by faith. Private revelations, and apparitions, although certain, belong not to Catholic faith; still they are often approved of by the Church.

And the Angelic Doctor teaches this when he says that our faith rests on no revelations except what have been made to the Patriarchs, Prophets, and Apostles (Scavini 2. p. 617.) We only mean to speak of a species of obligation imposed by reason and logic, which demands our assent to truths sufficiently proved.

Wherefore, in the following meditation on faith, we shall, on account of the similarity of matter, speak of the truths of the Catholic religion which all are bound to believe. Make, therefore, dear reader, the following

MEDITATION ON THE NATURE OF CATHOLIC FAITH.

I. Consider *what faith is*. “Faith is a virtue infused into the soul by God, by which we believe firmly in God and the truths revealed by Him, and which are proposed to us by the Church on His authority.” Hence, we see that by divine faith we believe only God himself, the truths He has revealed and which the Church proposes to our belief as such. The object of faith, then, are the truths contained in Holy Scripture and Divine Tradition, and nothing else. Further, the Church is Holy Scripture because she gives it to us and interprets its meaning. She is like a mother who teaches her children—an instructress who speaks to her pupils; nay, she is far superior to these, because she is assisted by God so that she cannot err. Are you aware of this, dear reader? Are you not one of those who criticise the Church, and question Catholic faith without knowing it?

II. Consider the *motives* of Catholic faith: they are the infallible authority of God and the Church. She tells us that certain truths are revealed of God, and we admitting this, and knowing that God is infallible, and can neither deceive, nor be deceived, firmly believe

these truths. Hence, since the Church is infallible in her definitions, and God in His revelations, our faith rests upon the most solid foundations conceivable. Reflect, then, dear reader, how certain, firm, and unshaken our holy faith is. * * * Is this your faith?

III. Consider how beautifully adapted to Catholic faith are the words of St. Paul, given above: "*Your service is reasonable.*" By faith we submit our intellect to God, who is sovereign truth. What more reasonable than this? By doing so we do not believe blindly, but *reasonably*. It is by reason itself that we know the infallibility of God, and His consequent infinite authority. It is reason, too, that calls upon us to admit the infallible authority of the Catholic Church. * * * Are you, my dear reader, one of those who say Catholics believe blindly and without foundation? Do you not assert that only weak-minded women and ignorant men can have Catholic faith?

Read this meditation over again, if it needs be, and examine your conscience in order to ascertain if this is your faith.

Practice.—Make this day three acts of faith slowly, and with attention.

Ejaculation.—O Mary! Mother of the faith, revive my faith in me!

CHAPTER II.

The Opposition of Bad Faith; or the Skeptics.

"If I had not come and spoken to them, they would not have sinned; but now they have no excuse for their sin." John xv. 22.

In these our days especially, there exists in the world a class of persons who wish to be called *Strong-minded*,

Free Thinkers, Rationalists, Philosophers, Learned, Scientists; while in reality, none of these titles are suitable to them. *Strong minds*? Do they show they have got a mind? *Free Thinkers*? Do they ever think? *Rationalists*? Instead of using reason, do they not distort it? *Philosophers*? Do they really love *wisdom*, and seek it dispassionately? *Learned, Scientists*? They may be men of learning and science, if you will; but they are skilled in every matter except religion; and if they happen to have any fixed knowledge, they distort it by the most debased contradictions. They are those mentioned by Ovid and Petrarch, who say, "I see the good, but embrace what is bad." They are those mentioned by St. Paul, "who know God, but do not Glorify Him as God."

Regarding the point in question, they have established in their minds the *impossibility* of miracles, prophecies, and supernatural apparitions of God and His Saints, and therefore care not to study the facts that confirm them. One of them, a writer on the *Paris Presse*, said that if news were brought him, announcing the most wonderful supernatural fact imaginable, as occurring outside his own house on the piazza of Concord, he would not deign turn on his heel to see it. Hence it is that we designate the class to which he belongs by the term *skeptics*, for they are all of one accord in not believing, though they may differ in everything else. There was quite a number of this description at Lourdes at the time of the apparitions of the Immaculate.

At the first report of these supernatural occurrences the *skeptics* indulged a merry laugh, and regarding them as superstitions fit only to be hissed, said: "This little

girl is not even old enough to take an oath ; she would not be admitted by a court of justice to bear testimony even in a case of no importance ; and is any one so foolish as to expect us to believe her when recording an *impossibility* like a supernatural apparition ?”

We answer : Is a supernatural apparition an *impossibility* ? Is a miracle *impossible* ? But tell me, my skeptical friends of Lourdes and Paris, and of all places and times, what you understand by a miracle ? Surely, your meaning is the same as ours—namely, that it is a *sensible* fact that occurs by Divine power outside the *ordinary* course of events. Is it not so ? For example, the sun rises in the morning, careers through the heavens the whole day long, and sets in the evening. Supposing, then, that having gained a certain altitude, the sun should stop in its course for an hour, let us say—this would be a miracle, because contrary to its accustomed order. Again, if a sick man, pronounced incurable by the medical faculty, should, by the simple use of water devoid of all medicinal properties, instantly recover his health—this, too, would be a miracle.

But in the name of common sense, my friends, who has established the natural order ? Who preserves and directes it ? Is it not God the Creator ? And if God has freely established this order, and has given it laws, do you mean to say that He cannot change this order—suspend, abolish or modify these laws in certain cases which in His divine mind warrant such a course ? * * * Excuse me, my friends, for saying that with all your philosophy, you have a very low estimate of the Creator—that supreme, self-existent Being, absolute, independent, omnipotent and infinite in all His perfections. An artificer who has done a certain work—let

us say a clockmaker, who has made a time-piece, is free to change it, modify its workings, and give it a new form, if he wish: cannot the first and independent Artificer do the same with His works? Nay, for stronger reasons can the divine Architect modify the works of His hands, for by so doing He changes not at all His eternal decrees; because, although He has established the laws of nature *ab eterno*, He has also decreed in the very same moment to derogate from them in certain circumstances, in order to manifest His glory and power. God, says St. Augustine, changes His works, but never His decrees.

And again, my friends, how do you explain the apparitions recorded in the Holy Bible? Are they also impossible?

For the present let us pass over every other argument in proof of the *possibility* of miracles and apparitions. I place you standing here, skeptical gentlemen, to consider the facts of Lourdes. If supernatural apparitions are impossible, how do you explain those of Lourdes?

“Easily done. It was a comedy in eighteen acts, planned by Bernadette’s parents for their own benefit; and their deceitful little girl was the actress.”

Indeed! Bernadette a cheating impostor? How then explain the simplicity, the candor, the modesty, so much admired in this little child? While every one speaks of the wonders revealed to her, she alone is silent. She speaks not, except when interrogated. She then relates everything without affectation, and with wonderful candor. To the numerous questions put her she gives without hesitation, answers precise and to the purpose—the product, doubtless, of strong conviction. The most sagacious and able Commissary of Police, in

an interview of over an hour, succeeds not in catching her in a contradiction; nor is he able to perplex her, or confuse her ideas, or force from her a retractation even with the threats of imprisonment, as M. Estrade testifies. The Curè threatens her with hell-fire if she is lying in so grave a matter. The Imperial Procurator submits her to a long series of interrogatories; but all in vain. Recourse is also had to magnetism; but this succeeds in nothing except in causing the poor child a violent headache. She is examined by the Episcopal Commission, and is found ingenuously simple, modest and sincerely frank. And have you forgotten, skeptical gentlemen, that Bernadette was then a poor shepherdess—ignorant, unlettered, brought up amid the Pyrenees with the lambs she led to pasture; that she spoke a vulgar dialect, and knew not the national language? Do you find cheating actresses like her on the mountains?

Further, let us tell the reader, for the benefit of the skeptics, that the explanation—namely, that Bernadette was a cheat and an impostor, did not keep its ground at Lourdes twenty-four hours. People spoke with her, and said they had seen great actresses at Paris, and that art was a different thing. All did homage to her sincerity.

But resume the skeptics: "It was the parents that trained her up for their own benefit."

Skeptical gentlemen, let me answer with facts. A certain gentleman having gone to visit her, offered her a purse full of gold. But Bernadette blushed with indignation, and refused the money. "I want nothing, sir," said she; "take home your money."

"But it is not for you, my child, it is for your parents

who are in want ; and you cannot prevent me from helping them."

"Neither Bernadette nor we wish for anything," replied the parents.

"You are poor," persisted the unknown man ; "I have put you to great inconvenience, and I am interested in you. Is it then through pride you refuse my offer?"

"No, sir ; but we absolutely decline to receive anything. Take your money away."

Skeptical men, you know who sent this unknown person to the Soubirous family. Dear, reader, I must tell you, by way of parenthesis, he was sent by the skeptical police.

A strange family, who were very wealthy, became enamored of Bernadette, as was the case with all who happened to get into her company, and proposed to adopt her, offering her parents one hundred thousand francs, and the privilege of living with their daughter : but both she and they refused.

A lady, having learned of the misery in which the Soubirous family were situated, one day dropped two pieces of gold into Bernadette's pocket. But she quickly picked them out, and restored them to the lady with an air of offended dignity.

"But, my child," said the lady, "are not your parents very poor ? Sometimes you have not bread enough in the house?"

Ah ! Madam," said Bernadette, "I have not always enough, but very little does me."

On another occasion, a priest greatly moved by her condition, offered her a silver coin. She refused. He insisted ; she still declined the donation. The priest at last said: "Please take it; it will be not for you, but for

the poor. Then you shall have the pleasure of giving an alms."

"Give the alms yourself, Rev. Father, according to my intention ; it will be better thus," replied Bernadette.

And now, skeptics of Lourdes, you who were on the spot know well, and can tell others, and so can I, too, that Bernadette's family was so very poor as often to be in want of the simple necessaries of life. And in point of fact, a pious young girl, who had made her first Communion with Bernadette, and was on intimate terms with her, told me, on the 3d of last July, in Lourdes, that she had often given her a piece of bread to satiate hunger. My God! How admirable you are in your ways!

Skeptics, what have you to say? Was it self interest that urged Bernadette's parents to invent the "Comedy" of the apparitions at the Grotto, as you are pleased to style the fact? They are now dead; and they died poor, as they had lived. Mary, sister to Bernadette, is married to a miller; the elder brother, J. Maria, has entered the Society of the Christian Brothers, and the youngest brother has been placed by the Missionaries of Lourdes in the Institution of Our Lady of Garaison. (Laf. p. 231).

The accusation, namely, that Bernadette had been in collusion with the clergy to act this part, we will not discuss here ; we refer the reader to the tenth chapter of this "second part."

But, urge the skeptics, granting that Bernadette was sincere and truthful, still the apparitions at Lourdes are not proved, because she was under the influence of hallucination ; she believed she saw, but did not see ;

and heard, but did not hear. The ecstasies were not impostures, nor the product of art on her part; they were the effect of sickness, catalepsy, a disordered brain, and a disturbed state of the nerves and muscles. You will see that within one month the poor visionary shall be completely crazy and probably paralytic.

We reply. You, skeptics, say that Bernadette was in a state of hallucination; but have you ever seen another case like this? Do you believe it? "The wisdom of her answers," writes the Bishop of Tarbes, in his pastoral of approbation regarding the apparitions, "reveals in this child a sound mind, a calm imagination, and an intelligence beyond her years. Religious sentiment has never produced in her a character of self-exaltation, nor superinduced a disordered intellect, or aberration of the senses, or feelings of pride, or morbid affections that might probably have disposed her to become the victim of imaginary creations. She saw the vision, not only once, but eighteen times. The first time she saw it suddenly, and without being prepared for such an occurrence; and during the fifteen days, although she daily expected the vision, still, on two of those days, she did not see it though she was in the same place, and in identical circumstances. And again, what happened during the apparitions? A wonderful transformation was worked in her. Her face assumed a new expression; her countenance was lit up with brightness; she saw things she had never seen before, and heard a new language, whose signification she did not always understand, but which she still remembers. Such a concurrence of circumstances does not allow the possibility of hallucination."

But it is all the effect of catalepsy. Do you say so?

I must ask you, skeptics, are you physicians? If you are, then hear one of your colleagues. You are not? Do you believe in physicians skilled in their art? Then here is how the matter stands: Divine Providence was pleased to place at Lourdes, on the very site, and at the very time of the apparitions, a doctor, of high standing in the medical faculty, and perfectly disinterested—a man, too, who at first did not believe in them, but who still undertook to study them attentively. He, too, had heard the report from the skeptics that Bernadette could possibly be subject to fits of catalepsy, and wished to ascertain the real fact. Wherefore, with great inconvenience to himself, he makes it his business to be present at the apparitions; now hear how he speaks of them in his beautiful book—*La Grotte de Lourdes—Sa fontaine et ses guerisons*: “I, who have followed with great attention all the movements of Bernadette, in order to study her completely under many points of view, have been able to ascertain the state of the circulation of her blood, and of her respiration. I took hold of her arm, and placed my finger on the radial artery. Her pulse was tranquil and regular, her respiration, easy; nothing indicated to me over-excitement of the nerves, which, did it exist, would have acted in a particular manner on her whole organism. There is no question, then, of catalepsy, with its rigidity, or of hallucination in the case.” And by way of epigraph he says: “*I have believed because I have seen, and therefore, have I spoken.*”

In one month she will be completely crazy and probably paralytic? Very well; a month, and two months; one year, and eighteen years have passed away. Bernadette was asthmatic before the apparitions, and has remained so after them. But she always was sound of mind, and continues so to this day.

And now, skeptics, free thinkers, rationalists, philosophers, learned scientists, what is your opinion? Bernadette is truthful and well informed; and therefore, she is not deceived herself, nor does she wish to deceive others. She has all the marks that appertain to testimony worthy of faith; and she testifies as we have demonstrated, upon a *possible* fact. How can you hesitate to believe its reality? How refuse credence to this truth—namely, that Bernadette has really seen eighteen times a person who called herself the *Immaculate Conception*. This is what she testified to; and we have proved it, as was our duty as a historian. Now, then, the fact is supernatural because it bears divine fruit.

In fine, dear reader, in order to form a proper estimate of these skeptics—these would-be-called philosophers—hear what happened to them at Lourdes.

On the 25th of February, a fountain sprung up beneath the hands of the little girl while in ecstasy, and its volume was increasing from day to day. Still the skeptics audaciously undertook to deny the fact. "There never was a fountain there," they said. "It is a puddle formed by some accidental infiltration, and discovered by the merest chance when Bernadette scraped up the clay."

"It is only a pretence that water is running there," ventured another.

"By no means," he was answered, "we have been to see it; it is a dirty mire, and nothing else."

Silly brains, so bewildered with prejudice, would it be so much trouble for them to go back to see the fountain? In a quarter of an hour they could have reached it, and so have seen that if on the 25th of February, the fountain was only a mud-puddle, its stream in-

creased, every day from that date. But the skeptics do not examine the fact; they reject it directly. And then, they call it a puddle—a dirty mire: a fountain that discharges 122,400 quarts of water a day. Yet these men are called strong minds, free thinkers, rationalists, philosophers, learned, scientists. But where do they exhibit sound criticism? Where, good logic?

Moreover, the very same day on which the fountain sprung up, the cures, too, commenced. Louis Bourriette, as we have mentioned, having bathed his almost sightless eye with the water of the fountain, was instantly healed. The skeptics, gathering in the cafés, talked the matter over, giving it all manner of colorings. * * * One said that Bourriette was not cured at all; another, that his eye had never been afflicted; while a third, of the school of Rénan, said that he only imagines that he is cured, and thinks he sees. A physiologist present said, that the imagination, betimes, works with wonderful influence upon the nerves. * * * “Bourriette does not even exist,” lustily asserted a new comer, more radical than the rest. * * * Do you see, dear reader, how the *rationalists* employ their reason? Vile wretches that they are, I say to them: go test the truth of the fact, even now. Does it cost so much? Pass one moment in Bourriette’s company, and he will tell you that for twenty years he had not had good sight in one of his eyes, in consequence of a hurt he had received in the mines; all Lourdes knows it to be the case. Let them ask Dr. Dozous, who has attended the patient. Let them have his eye examined by any physician, and let them look at him well. He does not even exist? What a pity Bourriette did not enter the café at the moment, and prove by his presence, his physical existence to the

skeptics who had denied it. A stunning stroke of his powerful arm would probably be the only persuasive argument with this class of men.

Moreover, do they not confess their discomfiture by the very fact of recurring to the Syndic to have a decree issued prohibiting all persons to go to the Grotto to get water from the miraculous fountain? And, in truth, if all the cures were only imaginary, and if all the facts recorded of the Grotto were only superstitions, why not let the whole matter die out naturally? It is well known that superstitions, and falsehoods, and errors, last only for a day, and then die, as Cicero says: *Opinionum commenta delet dies*.

The skeptics further said that the water of the Grotto was medicinal; but this question we will examine in the fifth chapter. Let us now make the following

MEDITATION.

I. Consider the *substance* of the sin of heresy. Laying aside theological subtleties, we understand with the Church that heresy "is a voluntary and pertinacious error against some Catholic truth." We have called it in the first place an *error*, and this has place when any truth of faith is denied—as, for example, the possibility of miracles, or supernatural apparitions; the existence of hell or purgatory; the eternity of the pains of the damned. In the second place, it is *voluntary*—that is to say, committed with advertence and deliberation. Hence, the error of those who are deceived in believing that a certain dogma of faith has never been defined as such, would not be heresy. In the third place, it must be *pertinacious*; and this has place when a certain opinion, well known to be contrary to the teaching of the

Church, is still defended and professed. In the fourth place, *it must be against some Catholic truth*—that is to say, a truth revealed by God, and proposed as such by the Church. Hence we see that the skeptics who deny the apparitions of Lourdes are not on that account heretics, because they have not been defined by the Church as truths of faith; while, on the contrary, those are heretics who deny the possibility of miracles in general, because this is a truth defined by the Church. And, reader, how are your sentiments on this matter of heresy? Do you pertinaciously deny any truth of faith?

II. Consider the *malice* of heresy. As we believe, and ought to believe truths of faith, because revealed by God, for by believing them, we also believe Him; so by denying one article of faith, we deny the infallibility of God, and therefore will not admit that He cannot deceive or be deceived. Oh! how enormous then must be the sin of heresy! How injurious to God! You are offended, and with reason, if a person does not believe you. How comes it, you say, or at least think so in your heart, that you will not believe me? What do you take me to be? For an audacious liar? * * * And still every man is a liar, as the royal prophet says (Pslm. cxv. 2). But, on the contrary, God is truth. He is most perfect and holy. * * * Have you reflected on this?

III. Consider the *evils* caused by the sin of heresy. First, it robs a man of the true faith, because it saps its foundation, and therefore renders it impossible for one to please God, as St. Paul says (Heb. ii. 6). And, again, speaking of the heretics of his time, the same Apostle says distinctly that they have made shipwreck concerning the faith (Tim. I., ep. i. ch. 19). Secondly, it conse-

quently excludes from paradise, and sends a soul to hell, because it is a mortal sin. Thirdly, by reason of it one incurs the greater excommunication which is specially reserved to the Pope. O what evils! * * * Do you think of this? * * * Examine your conscience diligently, and take counsel of a pious and learned confessor.

Practice.—Renew your faith by reciting from your heart the formula given in your prayer-book, and say three *Aves* to the Most Holy Virgin, for the conversion of heretics.

Ejaculation.—I believe, O Lord; help my unbelief! (Macc. ix. 23.)

CHAPTER III.

The Police of Lourdes.

In vain do the machinations of men offer resistance to the counsels of Divine Providence. (Pius IX., Brief to M. H. Lasserre.)

Seeing that, notwithstanding their scoffs and sarcasms, the fame of the apparitions and the miracles was increasing more and more, and that immense crowds were gathering at the Grotto, the skeptics united in urging the Syndic of Lourdes to issue a decree, prohibiting all access to the rocks of Massabielle, which were a part of the common. Such a decree, thought they, will surely be violated by the popular passion, and will be the occasion of countless legal proceedings; resistance will be offered by the people, and they shall be arrested, and the civil authority—whether the judiciary, the police, or the administrative department—will easily have cause to deal summarily with the whole proceedings, because it shall be sustained by all the powers of the State.

M. Anselm Lacadè was then Syndic of Lourdes. He was an upright and excellent man, though perhaps a little timid, and somewhat ambitiously attached to his badge of office. He refused to issue the decree, saying that amid so many reports he knew not where the truth lay. "There are no disturbances," he said; "the religious phase of the question—namely, the determining the truth or falsity of the apparitions belongs to the Bishop, and in its administrative point of view it falls within the Prefect's sphere of action. As for me, I will stand aloof, and will not act in the capacity of Syndic, except with express orders from the Prefect." And he shaped his conduct accordingly.

If, however, the civil administrative authority of Lourdes did not take action in the case, not so did the Police, who, at the time, were presided over by a Commissary named M. Dominic Jacomet, a man of great sagacity, and who was much quicker at detecting rogues and imposters than in discerning the hand of God in things human. He believed, it is said, that supernatural apparitions were impossible, and that those recorded of Lourdes were an imposture well arranged probably by the priests, who, nevertheless, kept cautiously away from the Grotto. And so he imagined that by detecting fraud in this case, he could deal a mortal blow to all the apparitions of the past.

Firm in his opinion, he had had, from the very first days of the apparitions, caused all Bernadette's paths to be carefully watched, in order to detect her in mysterious communication with some priest of Lourdes, or of the neighboring towns. He had placed—at least it seems so—in the very church one of his minions to watch the confessional: but Bernadette appeared not

at the tribunal of penance. Well, then, perhaps the priests had got nothing to do with the matter ;—it was the little girl herself alone who, perchance, was acting this comedy for her own benefit. Nevertheless, there might be others mixed up in the matter, as he surmised, but his suspicions were based upon no proof. This man was indeed a regular type of a true Commissary of Police.

On Sunday, the 21st of February, as Bernadette, in company with others, was leaving church after the evening devotions had terminated, a police officer approached her, and touching her on the shoulder, said, “In the name of the law.”

“What do you want of me?” asked the little girl, very much frightened.

“I have orders to arrest you.”

“From whom?”

“From the Commissary of Police.”

Immediately a threatening murmur burst forth from the multitude. Many of them had been spectators of her ecstasies, and, therefore, in their eyes Bernadette was a child of God. Wherefore, on seeing the officer lay hands on the little girl, did they shout with indignation, and resolve to interfere. Fortunately a priest, who happened, on leaving the church, to notice the occurrence, made a sign to them to keep still, telling them to let the officer have his way : and the multitude, all aglow with agitation, followed Bernadette under arrest, as far as the Commissariate of Police, which was near by. The officer entered with the child, and ushering her into the corridor, locked the doors. In a little while Bernadette was before the Commissary, while the immense concourse of people remained outside.

M. Jacomet for a moment fixed upon the girl his sharp, scrutinizing eyes, to which he had the wonderful faculty of imparting, in an instant, an expression of benevolence of the most tender kind. He who had habitually used commanding tones with everybody, was more than gentle with the daughter of the miller, Soubirous. He was sweet and insinuating. He requested her to take a seat; and while interrogating her, assumed the affectionate air of a true friend.

“It seems you see a beautiful Lady at the Grotto of Massabielle, my pretty little girl? Is it so? Tell me all.”

Just then the door opened gently and M. Estrade, the tax collector, entered. He was one of the most estimable and intelligent gentlemen in Lourdes, and at this time gave no credit to the apparitions. He lived in the same house with the Commissary, and having learned from the acclamations of the people outside that Bernadette was before the dignitary, he had the most natural curiosity to be present at the examination. He took a seat near by, and made a sign to the Commissary that he would not cause any interruption. All this passed without Bernadette seeming to notice it. Thus there was a witness, who took notes of the interview at the time, and some years later gave them to M. Las-serre, the historian of the Madonna of Lourdes, who was thus enabled to verify the account given by Bernadette.

On being interrogated by the Commissary, Bernadette looked at him with a sweet, innocent gaze, and commenced, with apparent timidity, which added somewhat to her veracious utterances, to relate in her native dialect the wonderful events which had engaged her for

some days past. M. Jacomet listened to her very attentively, assuming, at the same time, an air of benevolence and kindly feeling. From time to time he took notes of her testimony.

The child observed him, but heeded little what he did. When she had finished her narration the Commissary, with still more sweetness and eagerness, put her questions to no end, as if, indeed, his enthusiastic piety had caused him to become interested beyond measure, in these extraordinary occurrences. He formulated all his interrogatories without regard to order, inserting here and there short phrases in a hurried way, so as not to give the child time to reflect. But to his various questions she replied without the slightest shadow of confusion or hesitation, and with the tranquil certainty of one describing the appearance of a well known landscape, or of a familiar picture. Often, in order to make him better understand, she used gestures, thereby to supplement, as it were, with pantomime the impotence of speech.

Meantime the rapid pen of Jacomet had noted down all her answers. And then it was that, after having endeavored so to tire out and confound the child's mind by subjecting her to the minutest details of circumstances, that this terrible police agent suddenly assumed a threatening aspect, and an uncouth manner of address.

"You are telling lies," he exclaimed, in a violent, angry tone; "you are deceiving the people, and if you do not instantly confess the truth, I shall have you arrested by the police."

Poor Bernadette, on seeing this sudden and formidable metamorphoses, was as much amazed as if, think-

ing she was holding in her hands a branch of a tree, she had on a sudden felt shocked and horror-stricken by the appearance of a snake entwining her fingers in its slimy coils. She was struck with astonishment ; but contrary to the expectations of the Commissary, she did not lose her presence of mind, but remained calm and collected as if some invisible power had supported her under the embarrassment of this unexpected shock. The Commissary immediately stood up, and looked at the door, thereby giving her to understand that only a signal from him was needed and the police would be on hand to take her to prison.

“Sir,” said Bernadette, with a calm and sweet firmness, which, in this poor little peasant girl, was simply grand and incomparable—“sir, you can have me arrested by the police, but I cannot say anything contrary to what I have stated. I have told the truth.”

“That is what we have to see,” replied the Commissary, resuming his seat, and judging with one glance of his practiced eye, that threats were powerless with this extraordinary child.

M. Estrade, a silent and impartial witness of the scene, was divided between the astonishment occasioned by the accents of Bernadette so full of self-conviction, and the wonder with which, despite himself, the able strategy of Jacomet had struck him according as he saw its full bearing develop itself.

The contest now assumed an unexpected character between Jacomet's redoubled force of *finesse* and the girlish weakness of Bernadette, having no defense except her own simplicity.

Jacomet, armed with the notes of three quarters of an hour, resumed his interrogatories, but in quite a dif-

ferent order. He threw them into a thousand captious forms, proceeding always, as was his custom, in a quick and rapid way, and insisting on immediate answers. He felt sure, by this line of proceeding, to catch the girl in contradiction, at least upon some small particular. This once effected, imposture would have been detected, and he would have become master of the situation. But in vain did he reveal all his mental anxiety in the multiplex evolutions of skillful manœuvre. The child did not contradict herself in the least. To the same questions, under whatever form put, she gave the same answers—if not the same in words, certainly identical in meaning. Jacomet became still more obstinate, if for no other reason, at least to tire out the little mind he wished to catch in error. He twisted her narrative of the apparitions into every possible style of diction without being able to shake her evidence. He felt like an enraged beast that would, in order to satiate its venom, fain grind up a diamond.

“Very well,” said he in fine to Bernadette; “I will now write the verbal process, and then read it to you.” And he wrote two or three pages rapidly, consulting his notes, and making in some particular places a few slight changes—as, for example, the form of the Virgin’s dress, and the length and position of her veil. This was a new plan—but useless as the others. He read to her these slight alterations in her testimony, and asked her from time to time if such were not the case. But Bernadette replied humbly, but with a firmness simple and sweet as it was resistless. . . . “No,” she would say, “I have not said so. But this is what I have said”—and thus re-established all the distorted circumstances in their primitive truthfulness. Many times Jacomet contested

the case, saying to her: "But you have said this. I wrote it down at the very moment. You have related the matter thus to many persons in the city." * * * But Bernadette insisted that she had not spoken so; and that she could not have given such an account to any one, because it was not the truth. Thus the Commissary was always forced to yield to the child.

He next turned to use threats. * * * "If you continue," he said, "to go to the Grotto, I will have you imprisoned, and you shall not leave here until you promise me that you will not go there again."

"I have promised the Vision to go," replied Bernadette, and when the moment arrives I am impelled thither by some unknown power that takes possession of me."

The examination lasted over an hour. Outside the multitude became restless and impatient. The excitement increased, and was beginning to assume a threatening aspect. Frequent knocks were heard at the door. The Commissary did not stir. The knocks became more violent. The man who was rapping shook the door, and endeavored to force it. Jacomet, enraged, stood up and opened the door. "No admission," he said, angrily, "what do you want?"

"I want my daughter," replied the miller, Soubirous, at the same time forcing his way in search of his child. The expression of the child's face calmed the anxious agitation of the father, who was only a poor man in presence of the most important personage in the town.

Francis Soubirous had taken off his cap * *, and was twirling it in his hands. Jacomet, who let nothing slip by unnoticed, divined the miller's fears, and assuming an air of good nature and compassion, familiarly

tapped him on the shoulder, saying: "Father Soubirous, be careful! Be careful! Be careful! Your daughter is after making a bad job, and is going directly to prison. I will not send her this time, on condition that you prohibit her going to the Grotto where she is playing a comedy. If she transgress again I will be inflexible; and you know, moreover, that the imperial Procurator does not joke."

"As you wish it, Mr. Jacomet," replied the poor father struck with alarm, "I will prohibit her, and so will her mother, too; and I feel sure that as she has always obeyed us, she will not go there any more."

"In any case, if she goes there again—if this scandal continues, I will have her and you arrested," said the terrible Commissary assuming a threatening attitude, and dismissing them both with a gesture.

As soon as Bernadette and her father went out, the crowd was heard to shout with the greatest satisfaction. The child went home with her father, and the crowd dispersed through the city.

The Commissary of Police and the Receiver, being now alone, commenced to relate one to the other, their impressions of this strange interview.

"What resistless firmness in her depositions," exclaimed M. Estrade, in profound astonishment.

"What invincible obstinacy in lying," answered Jacomet, astonished at his defeat.

"What truthful accents," continued the Receiver. "Not even once has she made a mistake in her words, or gestures. It is evident she believes she has seen the vision."

"What flexibility of intelligence," replied the Commissary "She has not contradicted herself in a tittle, not-

withstanding all my efforts. She has her story on the tips of her fingers."

And thus, both remained incredulous regarding the apparitions, but from motives directly opposite: one believed Bernadette an able impostor; the other, that she was truthful, but still deceived.

We must mention that M. Estrade, after having witnessed Bernadette's ecstasies, changed his opinion, and firmly believed; nay, more, aided the knowledge of the reality and truth of the apparitions by sending his depositions in writing, to M. Lasserre while engaged on his history.

M. Jacomet, though vanquished, had still gained a signal advantage: he had frightened the father, who, as soon as he had reached home, said to Bernadette: "You see that these gentlemen of the town are all against us; and that Mr. Jacomet, who can do whatever he likes, will have us all put in prison if you return to the Grotto.

"Father," replied Bernadette, "when I go there, it is not altogether of my own free will. At a certain moment I feel something within me that calls and draws me there."

"However it be," replied the father, "I strictly forbid you to go there again. Certainly you will not disobey me now, for the first time in your life."

The poor child, finding herself thus placed in a dilemma, between the promise made to the Apparition and the prohibition of her father, replied: "I will do all that is possible to keep away from there, and to resist the attractive power that calls me."

And in fact, on the following day, Monday, the 22d of February, she did not go to the Grotto, though she very much desired it, but to school; and if towards noon,

while on her way homeward, she went there, it was not of her own accord; she was brought there by that resistless power mentioned in a previous chapter. Having acquainted her father of the fact he withdrew his prohibition.

But meantime, the terrible Commissary, having seen that his prohibitions had been violated, and that Francis Soubirous had again given his daughter permission to go to the Grotto, had on that same day, the father, mother and child cited before him, and resorted again to intimidation. But, to his great surprise, he did not find before him now the terror-stricken miller of the preceding day.

“M. Jacomet,” said the poor man, “Bernadette has never told a lie; and if the good God, the Holy Virgin, or any Saint, calls her, we cannot oppose her. Put yourself in our position, M. Commissary: the good God would certainly punish us!”

“You yourself say,” argued Jacomet, casting a glance on the child, “that the Vision does not appear any more. Therefore, you have no further business at the Grotto.”

“I have promised to go every day for a fortnight,” replied Bernadette.

“They are all fables,” exclaimed the Commissary, in a rage. I shall have you all put in prison if this girl continues to excite the people with her mockeries.”

“My God,” exclaimed Bernadette, “I go to pray alone, and do not invite any one. And if so many persons go there before and after me, it is not my fault. People have said that it is the Holy Virgin appears; but I do not know who she is.”

Accustomed as he was to the repartee and evasive

answers of criminals, the Police Commissary was confused by this profound simplicity. Still, the thought never entered his mind that he was wrong, and that the apparitions were true; and instead of ceasing to oppose the free course of things, he resolved to call to his aid the authority of the judiciary. * * * "Indeed," he exclaimed, stamping the floor with his foot, "this is a stupid business." And allowing the Soubirous family to return home, he went himself to take council of the imperial Procurator.

But let us rest here, and make this

MEDITATION.

I. Consider *in what consists the crime of impugning the known truth*. It consists in a diabolical obstinacy, and daring malice in denying and studiedly combating any truth of faith—for example, the possibility of miracles. Men of this stamp are to be met with, who, although evidently knowing the truth, still deny it, and argue against it—not through ignorance, or passion, or a love of having truth triumph, but through a terrible perversity of mind. This was the sin of the Jews who, although witnesses of the miracles of Jesus Christ, which were more than sufficient to prove evidently the divinity of His mission, still did not believe His words. * * * Have you anything to reproach yourself with in this regard? Reflect. * * *

II. Consider *the injury this sin does the Holy Ghost*. When one sins through weakness, it is said that he sins against the Father, to whom power is attributed; when through ignorance, against the Son, to whom is assigned wisdom; but when through malice, against the Holy Ghost, to whom is given the attribute of goodness.

Moreover, there are certain sins so grave and enormous that they are called in a special manner, *sins against the Holy Ghost*; and one of these is to *impugn the known truth*, because a man who impugns and combats the known truth, resists it, and refuses adhesion to it through malice, directly offends the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Truth. * * * Oh! what a heinous sin! Do you reflect on this?

III. Consider *the consequence of impugning the known truth*. They are first, a hardness of heart produced by the abuse of God's grace; second, the greatest difficulty in becoming converted, superinduced by perversity of will, and obstinacy in opposing the truth; thirdly, the consequent risk of eternal damnation, according to what our Lord says in the Gospel: He that shall speak against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him neither in this world, nor in the world to come. (Math. xii. 32.) What a misfortune! What a serious evil! How terrible! And still how many impugn the well-known truths of Catholic faith!

Practice—Recite the *Veni Creator* for all the enemies of Catholic truth.

Ejaculation—O Lord! take not thy Holy Spirit from me.

CHAPTER IV.

The Prefect of the High Pyrenees in 1858.

“He that is not with me is against me: and he that gathereth not with me, scattereth.” (Luc. xi. 23.)

We have assisted at the combat of the works of God at Lourdes with the opposition party of good faith, and

have seen them illuminated with light divine, and finally placed on the high road to recognition and veneration. We have contemplated them engaged in strife with the skeptics, only to witness the defeat of these scoffers, and see them unmasked. We have closely observed them at issue with the police, without their having yielded an inch to these functionaries. Still, the opposition has not ceased : they have next to contend against what we term the opposition party of bad faith.

M. Dominick Jacomet, the Commissary of Police, having on the evening of the 22d of February, dismissed the Soubirous family, went off in all haste to M. Dutour, who was at the time Imperial Procurator. This man, notwithstanding his habitual horror of superstitions, was not able to discover in the arsenal of French law-books a single point on which to base a legal process against the child. If she had been caught any day in contradiction, proceedings could be taken against her as a propagator of false reports ; if she, or her parents, had received any pecuniary profit, a suit could be entered on the grounds of fraud ; if, in fine, any disorder had arisen among the crowds of people that flocked to the rocks of Massabielle, then this nascent superstition could be smothered on the grounds of preserving the public peace. But none of these things had occurred. All proceedings were therefore illegal. Jacomet, however, was not a man to retrace his steps, and, we must candidly tell it, he resolved then and there, to create an occasion for a process. Incredible, but still true.

It was he who, on the following day, sent the unknown man to Bernadette's house to offer her and her parents the purse of gold ; but to his great confusion

and mortification the money was rejected, as we have seen ; and so an occasion for proceedings did not offer itself. Then he informed the Prefecture of Tarbes—under whose jurisdiction Lourdes was, of the fact, giving it, however, the coloring of his own views.

Baron Oscar Massy, a Catholic of the so-called independent type, was Prefect of the High Pyrenees at the time. He professed a belief in the miracles recorded in the Holy Bible, but in none others. According to him there were no miracles nor supernatural occurrences in our days ; nor should there be, because they were no longer necessary. Wherefore, he was quick to form a judgment and to pronounce it : the facts recorded of Lourdes are superstitions ; therefore, they must be checked. And often he said, too : “ If I had been prefect of the department of the Isère at the time of the pretended apparitions of La Salette, I would have settled with that legend, as I shall soon do with that of Lourdes. All these creations of fancy will soon fall to nothing.”

Poor, simple man ! Who could have told him that the facts of Lourdes would have triumphed, and that before the year had closed he would have been transferred to the department of the Isère. But let us not anticipate events.

After all, as Prefect his administration was one of marked ability. At a glance he judged a situation. What a pity that this ease and promptness of action sometimes caused him to make mistakes : still he had the grave defect of not recognizing his errors ; and he was never known to go back on a resolution once formed, whether it regarded an idea or a fact.

Up to this time he had lived not only in peace, but

in cordial harmony with the Bishop of Tarbes, Monsignor Bertrand Severe Laurence. Nevertheless, without waiting for the decision of the Bishop, to whom alone it belonged to decide, as the question was a religious one, he, having got information from Jacomet in whom he placed blind reliance, wrote about the first of March to the Syndic of Lourdes to notify the commander of the fortress to place the troops of the garrison at his disposal, and have them ready for any emergency. Armed soldiers were to watch the Grotto day and night, and the local gendarmery and police officials were to give their aid. And this indeed was done to provoke, as people said openly, some remonstrance on the part of the immense multitude—some outburst, in order to have a pretext for criminal proceedings. But the people remained quiet, and the carabinieri, the guards and the soldiers themselves preserved a sympathetic and religious attitude.

About the 12th and 26th of March, he referred the case to the Minister, confining himself to the measures of which we have spoken, until he should receive an answer.

M. Rouland, formerly Procurator-General, and now director of the Bank of France, filled at the time the united offices of Minister of Worship and that of Public Instruction under Napoleon III. To say nothing regarding other points, the Minister did not believe one particle in the miracles and apparitions of Lourdes, and therefore came to an immediate conclusion without the slightest examination or reflection. Accordingly on the 12th of April he replied to the Prefect saying, "that it was his opinion that a stop should be put to these superstitions; that according to law no one could establish

an oratory, or a public place of worship without the twofold authority of the civil and the ecclesiastical power ; that, therefore, it was right to close the Grotto, in as much as it had been transformed into a species of capella : but still, this was a question of prudence and tact ; that, in fine, he should act in concert with the Bishop of Tarbes, and that he authorized him to tell the Bishop in his name, that he had been advised not to allow free scope to a state of things that was sure to afford a pretext for new attacks on the clergy and religion.

Accordingly, the Prefect recurred to the Bishop, asking him to prohibit Bernadette to go to the Rocks of Massabeille. Mons. Laurence understood at a glance, that the civil power wished to use the church as an instrument, and that it was determined to have recourse to violence—to the great detriment of the souls and persons of many. Now, he had sufficient esteem for his own dignity, and for his office, not to allow himself to be led astray. On the other hand, the threatened violence had to be kept in check ; wherefore, he entered upon a prudent line of action : it was this : he gave orders to the Pastor of Lourdes to council Bernadette against—going to the Grotto unless called there by that voice from heaven, in order not to give a pretext for persecutions ; but in case she felt that heavenly voice within her, not to stop her—thus respecting the sacred rights of liberty even in a child. And this course, in fact, was followed.

But at this time arose a question, apparently foreign to the case of Lourdes, but still bearing on it in a very decided manner : this was a question regarding the stables of the Prefect. He wished to build them on

sacred ground—an ancient cemetery which was adjacent to one of the gates of the Cathedral. As was right, the Bishop opposed the project: the Prefect, as was his custom, continued obstinate. The suit was brought to Paris, where a verdict was given in favor of the Bishop. In order to satiate his wrath, the Prefect swore to be indirectly revenged of the Bishop by stopping the *superstitions* of Lourdes: and this is the course he followed.

Many offerings had been made to the Most Holy Virgin, in the Grotto of Lourdes, and the Prefect considered this a transformation of the place into a public chapel, which, not having been authorized either by the civil, or ecclesiastical power, was illegal. He could, therefore, plunder and close the Grotto; and he was resolved to do so. Further, he could not wreak his vengeance on Bernadette by having recourse to any criminal and penal process, but he could in an administrative way, by representing her as crazed, confine her in a lunatic asylum; and for this purpose he sent two doctors to her house—friends of his, and privy to his scheme, who, upon examination, declared her *possibly insane*; and this was enough for the Prefect.

About the first of May, the time of the Council of Revision, the Prefect took occasion to go to Lourdes, where he would meet all the Syndics of the district, and be enabled to have his two resolutions put in practice; and in fact, on the 4th, (thus did the religious Prefect commence his month of Mary), after having assisted at the labors of the military conscription, he delivered a discourse to the assembled Syndics, in which he notified them of the two following resolutions—namely, that the Syndic of Lourdes was to have Bernadette arrested, and sent to the hospital of Tarbes; and that the Commis-

sary was to plunder the Grotto. Having given these orders he set out from Lourdes, in order not to be present at their execution.

This battle against the work of God was magnificently arranged, as we will see. The cause would be removed by the arrest of Bernadette, and the effect by the spoliation of the Grotto. Would the people, fired with enthusiasm, rise up in rebellion? A squadron of horsemen was stationed at Tarbes awaiting the orders of the Prefect to gallop off to the scene, and put an end to resistance with the sword. But God was watching over His work.

Let us commence with the Syndic, and the arrest of Bernadette. M. Anselm Lacadè, the Syndic of Lourdes, was, as we have said, an excellent man, although a little too much attached to his office, and rather over-ambitious of his dignity: nevertheless, the Prefect's order had disconcerted him, and he went to the Imperial Procurator, M. Dutour, to take counsel; and both went to the pastor to notify him of the Prefect's injunctions, which were based upon a law passed on the 30th of June, 1838, regarding the insane.

Abbe Peyramale, the Curé of Lourdes, had from the commencement doubted the facts related by Bernadette, and had, consequently, acted with the utmost prudence in the case. But when the fountain had gushed forth, and many extraordinary cures had been wrought by its waters, he was convinced of the supernatural nature of the work: hence, he could not repress his indignation at the cruel iniquity of such a measure. * * * "This child is innocent!" he exclaimed, "and the proof is, M. Imperial Procurator, that you, as a magistrate, have not been able, despite your various interrogatories, to

find the slightest pretext for proceedings. You know there is no tribunal in France that would not recognize her innocence, which is as resplendent as the sun, and no Procurator-General who, under the circumstances, would not declare monstrous, and immediately stop—I will not say an arrest, but a simple act of the judiciary.”

“In fact, it is not the magistracy, but the administrative authority that is acting,” replied M. Dutour. “The Prefect, on the testimony of the physicians, wished to lock up Bernadette as being affected with insanity; and this he does in consequence of the interest he has in her recovery. This is a simple administrative measure which touches the Church in no way, in as much as neither the Bishop, nor the clergy have pronounced judgment on these facts.”

“Such a measure,” replied the priest, growing more animated, “would be the most odious of persecutions, in as much as it puts on the mask of hypocrisy, affects a wish to protect, wraps itself in the mantle of the law, while its real object is to oppress a poor, defenceless creature. If the Bishop, the clergy, and myself are waiting for a more brilliant light to shed its beams on the events that have taken place in our midst, in order to judge of their supernatural character, certainly we know enough to form a judgment of Bernadette’s sincerity, and of the soundness of her intellectual faculties. And since no lesion of the brain is manifest, how can your two physicians be more competent to judge of the insanity, or sanity, of the child than anyone else of the thousand visitors who have questioned her, and have admired the full clearness, and normal state of her mind? Your physicians themselves dare not affirm her insanity, and have come to no conclusion except with

an hypothesis. M. Prefect, you cannot by any title have Bernadette arrested."

"It is legal."

"It is illegal. I, priest and Curé, Foreign Vicar of the City of Lourdes, owe a duty to all, and in particular to the weak. If I saw an armed man rush upon a baby, I would defend it at the risk of my life, because I know the duty of protection incumbent on the good pastor. Know, then, that I could not act differently were that man a Prefect, and his arms, a wicked article of a wicked law. Go, therefore, and tell M. Massy that his gendarmery shall find me on the threshold of the door of this poor family, and that they shall have to knock me down, and pass over my body, and trample me under foot before they touch a hair in the head of this child."

"Nevertheless, * * *"

"There is no *nevertheless* here. Examine. Make inquiries; you are free to do so,—nay, more, all invite you to adopt this course. But if, instead of this, you wish to persecute and oppress the innocent, rest assured that before you touch the last and least of my flock, it is with me you have to begin."

The priest had risen to his feet. His lofty stature, the lines of determination that marked his brow, that fulness of power that rose up in him, his resolute jestures, his face lit up with emotion—all were a commentary on his words, and showed them in their proper light.

For an instant the Procurator and Syndic were silent. Then they talked of the measures relating to the Grotto.

"As regards the Grotto," replied the priest, "if the

Prefect wishes, in the name of the laws of the nation, and of his own particular piety to rob it of the presents that innumerable visitors have deposited there in honor of the Holy Virgin, let him do so. The faithful will be sad, nay, indignant; but rest assured the inhabitants of this town know how to respect authority even when in the wrong. It is reported that at Tarbes there is a mounted squadron only waiting the signal from the Prefect. Let them dismount. No matter how enraged the minds and wounded the hearts of the people may be, they will hear my voice; and I now take the responsibility of the tranquility of the place upon me, in case the armed forces do not appear. If they come, I do not hold myself responsible."

The result of this interview was that M. Lacadè tendered the Prefect his resignation as Syndic sooner than obey his orders to arrest Bernadette.

Not so did the other part of the degree fail of its purpose. M. Jacomet went to the Grotto, and plundered it of all its offerings, which he then removed to the communal palace, in presence of an excited multitude: but no disturbance took place.

Behold! how the cunning of men in vain opposes the counsels of Divine Providence, as the Sovereign Pontiff, Pius IX., beautifully says in his Brief to M. Henry Lasserre.

Rest yourself here, dear reader, and attach great importance to the following

MEDITATION ON DIVISION OF HEART.

I. Consider in what *division*, or *doubleness of heart* consists. It is the vice of those who wish to practice religion, and at the same time please the world and

their passions. Their object is to attain their own private interests, and this they cover with the mantle of public good, of charity, of convenience, of honesty, and consequently, of the greater glory of God. They wish to stand with Jesus Christ, and with the devil, with virtue and with vice, with the Pope and the Bishops, and with their enemies. They wish to go to church and to corrupt theatres—to frequent the sacraments, and visit houses in which their virtue is imperilled, and keep company with persons dangerous to their immortal souls. Are you one of these?

II. Consider *how much a divided heart displeases* God. He is jealous of our love, and wishes to reign alone in our hearts. Therefore, to give one-half to God, and the other to the world, is to do Him a most grievous injury, by putting Him thereby on a par with His enemy. Nay, the crime is more grievous than that of the idolators, since they adore their idols because they know not the true God, while we, on the contrary, place God, although knowing Him, on a level with creatures. And in point of fact, God had patience with the Philistines as long as they were only idolators; but when they wished to place the holy ark on the altar of their gods, He overturned the idol, and avenged Himself upon them in a terrible manner. Hence does He exclaim in the Holy Scriptures: *Vae duplici corde*—Woe to them that are of a double heart (Eccl. ii. 14). *Abominabile Domino cor pravum*—A perverse heart is abominable to the Lord (Prov. xi. 20); and in the epigraph prefixed to this chapter Jesus Christ has clearly said, that the man who is not with Him, is against Him. * * * Tremble lest you become subject to His anger.

III. Consider how *the man of divided heart is also displeasing in the sight of his fellow-men*. Yes; men, although they may be unjust, many times act justly in this, that they cannot forgive a want of uprightness and sincerity. Hence the pretended devotee does not please God, who looks upon him as a deserter, or the world, that regards him as a spy. Persons justly contemplate him with horror, because he dishonors virtue, which he feigns to profess. Men of worldly notions despise him, because he counterfeits virtue in order to be distinguished from them, while in reality he is pursuing a vicious course which confounds him with themselves.

Examine, therefore, dear reader, your heart and your manner of acting; and if you detect the slightest shadow of this vice in you, do all in your power to remove it as soon as possible. Examine also your thoughts and words regarding certain political questions of the day.

Practice.—Make three acts of charity, saying to God that you love Him *above all things*.

Ejaculation.—*Spiritus rectum innova in visceribus meo*—O my God! O my Lady of Lourdes! grant me a right spirit.

CHAPTER V.

The Chemical Analysis, and the closing of the Grotto.

“All wisdom is from the Lord God” (Eecl. i. 1).

One of the many objections with which the wicked oppose the Catholic Church, is taken from human sciences, and chiefly from the positive, such as Geology, Physics, Chemistry, etc. How many falsehoods are,

therefore, being scattered amongst the people either through malice or want of prudence! And yet, those blinded individuals do not notice that our holy religion loves nothing more than science, study, light, disputation, provided they be conducted logically and reasonably! One thing only does the Church fear, and that is ignorance, which, if it does not cause her evil directly of its own action, chills religious sentiment, and brings discredit on it in the hearts of men. This is, in fact, what Bacon of Verulam teaches when he says that philosophy little understood, can, perhaps, lead to Atheism; but when thoroughly understood, it leads the soul back to religion. (De Aug. Scient).

It was to the positive sciences that the craft of men at Lourdes now had recourse in order to resist the work of God.

Prefect Massy, on receiving the communication of the Syndic of Lourdes, in which he expressed his determination to resign office rather than have Bernadette arrested, and taking into consideration, too, the several other details of the letter, became very thoughtful, and felt a deep sense of wounded pride. He to be stopped in the execution of a measure so publicly announced the day before to the Levy Council (*Consiglio di Leva*)—he who had never gone back on his resolutions. * * * And still he had to be resigned to abandon his present course of tactics. It is true that by letting the little seer alone, he was recognizing her innocence and the integrity of her mind, but per force he had to keep still. To admit his own error, and repair the injury he had done, never passed through his mind. He resolved upon another plan.

In order to eradicate the "superstition," as he said,

it would suffice to make it appear that the cures effected by the water of the fountain were perfectly natural, inasmuch as they were produced by some medicinal quality inherent in it. Accordingly he wrote on the 5th of May to the Syndic of Lourdes to have the water of the fountain of Massabielle analyzed by a chemist of sufficient notoriety in the department, named M. Latour de Trie. This gentleman immediately went to work, and on the 6th inst., sent the result of his analysis to the Syndic, who immediately transmitted it to the Prefect.

The analysis was perfectly in keeping with the desires of the skeptics and the Prefect. And in fact, after having enumerated the different components of the water, the chemist concluded thus: "We do not consider that we are precipitating our judgment too far by saying that, having examined the combined qualities of the substances which compose the water, medical science will not, perhaps, be slow in recognizing in it some special curative properties that shall rank it in the number of those waters that constitute the mineral wealth of our department."

Meanwhile, the cures continued. The skeptics and the Prefect had a grand announcement to make, based on the analysis of their chemist: but the cures were so various and instantaneous that persons of intelligence were not set at rest by their explanation,—namely, that they were the fruit of the medicinal properties of the water. The analysis of Latour was opposed, and with reason. A chemist of the town, M. Thomas Pujo, affirmed that the water of the fountain was a natural fluid completely devoid of all medicinal properties. Various competent professors of the surrounding dis-

tricts confirmed this assertion. Science commenced to declare the analysis of Latour entirely false. These opinions had, in fine, taken such a consistent stand that the municipal Council of Lourdes, in a sitting of the 3d of June, unanimously enjoined upon the Syndic the obligation of having a new analysis made, and for that purpose to engage the services of Prof. Filhol, one of the greatest chemists of our time. Accordingly, the Syndic, on the very same day, wrote to him to Toulouse.

Whilst the professor was prosecuting his analysis, the state of things had undergone a great change. The Prefect was rewarded with 25,000 francs, and Jacomet received congratulations: nay, the Minister of Worship in a letter, which was transmitted to many functionaries, testified to the Prefect his great satisfaction, and praising him for all he had done, urged upon him the importance of taking energetic measures, and added that the Grotto and the miracles of Lourdes must be put an end to *at any cost*.

This letter was for the Prefect like a spark dropped into a powder magazine. The question of the stables had brought his exasperation to its acme. It was now the month of June. The watering season was approaching; and soon the bathers and tourists of all Europe would flock in to Lourdes. What a scandal, should they see supernatural cures and miracles in his department!

On the 6th of June, M. Fould, Minister of Finance of the Empire, being on his way to his estates, rested at Tarbes, and had, it is said, a long conference with M. Massy, regarding the facts related of the Grotto.

The able Prefect had an inspiration as ingenious as it was simple. He embraced it; and on the following day sent the Syndic of Lourdes the following decree:

“ THE SYNDIC OF THE CITY OF LOURDES,

“ Having seen the higher orders, etc., and the laws, etc. Considering etc., etc., decrees :

“ ART. 1.—It is prohibited to touch the water of the fountain of *Massabielle*.

“ ART. 2.—It is also prohibited to pass along the common called *the banks of Massabielle*.

“ ART. 3.—A barrier shall be placed at the entrance of the Grotto to prevent access. Sign boards shall be erected bearing the following inscription: It is forbidden to trespass on this property.

“ ART. 4.—Every violation of this decree shall be punished according to law.

“ LOURDES, June 8th, 1858.

“ *Syndic* A. LACADE.

“ Seen and approved,

“ *Prefect* O. MASSY.”

The decree was published by sound of trumpet, and posted throughout the city ; and under the protection of the soldiery, and according to Jacomet's directions, the Grotto was closed in such a way that ingress was rendered impossible, except by breaking the fence, or by scaling. Signboards bearing in large characters the words : “ It is forbidden to trespass on this property, under pain of proceedings before the tribunals,” were erected at every point where there could possibly be a chance of entering the common surrounding the venerated Rocks. The civic guards, and those of public safety, kept watch there day and night.

And yet, the people, without causing any disorder, continued to assemble around the Rocks, and poured out their prayers at a distance.

Behold, then, how these two cunning tricks of men did not succeed in overthrowing *the work of God*. And, in point of fact, supposing the analysis of Latour, regarding the qualities of the water of the fountain, to be true, how could the cures wrought by it be thereby explained? "Taking a complex view of the cures"--especially the sixteen cases examined by the Episcopal Commission, one of which was the healing of Louis Bouriette, which we have already mentioned, the physicians, engaged to examine the cases, said in their report to the Commission: "Taking a complex view of the cures, one is suddenly struck with wonder on seeing how a cause so simple produces effects so great; how one only remedy heals various diseases; how an application resorted to for a short space of time eradicates ailments which, according to the rules of medicine, should be subjected to long treatment; how such a process instantly removes maladies that have a long time baffled the restoratives suggested by art; how it expels chronic afflictions in a moment. Certainly there must be at work here a force superior to nature, which employs this water to manifest its power."

In fine, the Chemist of the Prefecture was completely refuted by the analysis of Filhol, which he sent the Syndic of Lourdes on the 7th of August. It was worded as follows:

"I, the undersigned, professor of chemistry to the faculty of science of Toulouse, professor of pharmacy and of toxicology to the school of medicine of the same city, Cavalier of the legion of honor, certify that I have analyzed a water issuing from a fountain, that has gushed forth in the vicinity of Lourdes.

"The result of this analysis is, that the water of the

Grotto of Lourdes is of such a composition that it can be considered a drinkable water, analygous to the greater portion of those waters which are met with on the mountains, where the soil is rich in limy substance. The extraordinary effects which, it is asserted, have been produced by the use of this water, *cannot be explained, at least in the actual state of science, by the nature of the saline substances which our analysis discovers. This water contains no active substance capable of giving it a therapeutic property, and it can be drunk without inconvenience. * * ** It is limpid, devoid of color and smell, and has no decided flavor. Its density is a little more than that of distilled water, etc."

And now, dear reader, on seeing how the enemies of the work of God wished to combat religion with the aid of science, make the following

MEDITATION ON THE HARMONY OF RELIGION WITH SCIENCE.

I. Consider how *religion and science cannot be contrary to each other*. Religion is derived from the revelation of God, and science, from human reason, which is also His creation. How then can we admit that God by revelation, teaches anything contrary to the dictates of reason? God is like a master who instructs his pupils by word and by writing, with this difference that a human preceptor can be deceived, but God cannot. Hence it is impossible for God to contradict Himself by teaching anything to be true by revelation, which is known to be false by reason. Reader, is not this true? Do you believe it? Are you not one of those who, having made only the most meagre studies, wish to fault and impugn the Catholic Religion?

II. Consider how *even religion and science mutually*

assist each other? Religion, by means of revelation, guides natural reason in its acts, and preserves it from error; and inversely, natural reason confirms religion, as has always been the case in well ordered universities where all the sciences are taught from a religious stand-point. And the proof of this is, that religion, and the Religious in by-gone ages, have preserved for us the sciences, which but for them would have perished: moreover, wherever religion is respected and practiced, there, too, do the sciences flourish. Do you believe this? Study the matter over, and ask the opinion of true scientists, and you will surely be convinced of its truth.

III. Consider, moreover, how *religion is the mother, the protector, and chief promoter of science.* The history of the Catholic Church, both in ancient and modern times, records this fact on every page. The Pope, the Bishops, and the Clergy, have, more than any other, cultivated the sciences, and promoted their growth. * * * Read history, and you will learn this.

Gather then this truth from the present meditation—namely, that you become convinced of the necessity of studying profoundly—not alone transient newspapers, and librettos, but books of solidity and learning; but if on the other hand, you have not time, or talent, or the convenience to apply yourself to study, do not undertake to decide matters of religion which you do not comprehend.

Practice.—Recite seven *Ave Marias* for those who believe themselves to be learned, and combat religion.

Ejaculation.—*Sedes sapientie, ora pro nobis.* O, Mary Immaculate of Lourdes, who art the seat of wisdom, pray for us.

CHAPTER VI.

The Legal Proceedings.

“This is the victory which overcometh the world, our faith.”

St. John v. 4.

In vain does the cunning of man oppose the counsels of Divine Providence, said the Sovereign Pontiff, Pius IX., *apropos* of the facts of Lourdes; and, as we have seen, not one of them has so far been overcome. Let us engage ourselves now in reviewing another sort of device.

The famous decree of the 8th of June, with its annexed penalties, having been published, all who resisted it were proceeded against by a Justice of the Peace. At this time M. Duprat held that official position at Lourdes. He was as fierce an enemy of the superstition as Jacomet, Massy, Dutour, and the other constituted authorities. This Justice, not being able under the circumstances to impose but a small fine, devised an indirect means of raising it to an enormous and really formidable amount for the poor people who came from all quarters to ask graces of the Virgin of the Grotto. He fined them five francs each, but in this single sentence were comprised all who had violated the Prefect's decree, whether by forming a part of the same crowd, or by having gone, under any pretext, to the Grotto on the same day. He pronounced sentence upon all by way of consolidation of fines—that is to say, if a hundred, or two hundred persons were found together at the Rocks of Massabielle, each one was liable to pay not only for himself but for all the others; thus the fine would reach the amount of from five hundred to ten hundred francs a man; and although the individual and principal

sentence was only a five franc fine, still, the decision of this Justice was without appeal to a higher tribunal, and consequently there was no chance of redress. Justice Duprat was omnipotent, and was not slow to use his power. It is true that the government with brutal violence, had denied so far the *possibility of the apparitions*, as being opposed to Catholic faith, which was the prevailing religion of the Empire; it is true that it had denied, too, the hundreds of cures established in the most convincing manner; it is true that this was a monstrous cruelty towards the poor sick—still the Prefect of the High Pyrenees and Baron Massy wished it: and this was enough.

Who, then, would not have expected that under these trying circumstances the Grotto would be forgot? But, no; the people still flocked there. The more courageous defied legal proceedings and fines, tore down the barriers, and went to pray at the Grotto, after having given their names to the guards who kept watch around the entrance of the common. Many of the guards themselves believed like the people, and before taking their post used to prostrate themselves on their knees at the entrance to the venerated place. Poor fellows! They were obliged to obey authority in order not to lose their daily pittance. Others of the faithful believers, respecting the barriers, went to the Grotto by bye-ways, while one of the party would remain behind to watch, and with a conventional signal notify the others of the arrival of the police. In this way many infirm were brought with great difficulty as far as the miraculous fountain. The official authority having been notified of this violation of the decree, doubled the guards and intercepted every pathway. Still there

were persons who, despite the violence of the current, used night after night, to swim the Gave, in order to go and pray at the Grotto and drink the water of the holy spring. Often people went to pray on their knees beside the sign-boards that were erected on the extreme limits of the common. This was, as it were, a mute protest against the authorities—a mute appeal to the Omnipotent God. Other times poor people afflicted with paralysis, blindness, and other serious maladies which medicine could not cure, and whose healing was a secret with God, came a long way to the Syndic's house, and entreated him with suppliant hands to permit them to go make one last trial of the miraculous spring. But the Syndic, in the name of the higher authority, refused permission. O cruelty unheard of! Law proceedings were taken even against the sick. Many then went on the right bank of the Gave, facing the Grotto. On certain days there was a countless host of persons assembled, against whom proceedings could not be taken, because the ground they occupied belonged to private individuals, who believed the blessing of heaven would descend upon them by permitting the pilgrims to pray upon their property with their eyes turned towards the Grotto.

The entire population became indignant, but still suppressed their wrath.

The authorities were often put to severe trials. Persons of illustrious birth openly violated the enclosure. One day a strange man of most decided appearance and gigantic build, was stopped on arriving at the enclosure, for he intended to pass on to the Rocks of Mas-sabielle.

“You cannot pass.”

“You shall see that I will pass,” replied the stranger in a most decided tone, at the same time entering the common without being in the least abashed, and directing his steps to the Grotto.

“Your name? I must take proceedings against you.”

“My name is Louis Veillot,” replied the stranger.

While the illustrious scrivener was proceeding with his law-form a lady had outstepped the limits by a few paces, and was just in the act of kneeling beside the fence that shut in the Grotto. The hundred-eyed Argus slipped by Veillot, and ran up to the kneeling woman.

“Madam,” said he, “it is not allowed to pray there. I have just caught you in a flagrant offence, for which you shall have to answer before the Justice of the Peace, who judges immediately, and whose decision is without appeal. In the name of the law, I begin my process. Your name?”

“I will readily give it,” replied the lady. “I am Madam Bruat, wife of the Admiral, and governess to His Royal Highness, the Prince Imperial.”

Jacomet, terrible as was his wrath, was stunned into respect. He did not write the process. Such scenes as these were often renewed. Certain processes used to terrify the Prefect’s agents, and would have terrified the Prefect himself. Sad state of things! The decree was violated by the great, while the poor had to suffer the penalties it inflicted. Two weights and two measures were in use.

What say you, reader? Was not this a grand triumph which the work of God gained at Lourdes? What faith in the masses of the people? Enter into yourself, and make the following

MEDITATION ON THE QUALITIES OF FAITH.

I. Consider how our faith must be *certain*—that is, it must exclude all doubt, all opinion, all suspicion regarding the truth of what it teaches. Even to suspect, fear or doubt its truths is of itself a crime against faith, because it is to suspect, fear or doubt the infallibility of God or of His Church. Now, we speak here of voluntary doubt, opinion or suspicion—that is to say, entertained with full advertence; but we do not at all refer to those temptations against faith which float across the mind, but to which consent is not given. Is this your faith? Do you not entertain doubts, suspicions or opinions regarding the truth of some articles of faith?

II. Consider how our faith must be *firm*, that is, it must be ready to resist every assault, and every persecution that may be brought into action against it. And this means that we must be prepared to give up life itself, as the Catechism teaches, rather than deny the truths of faith even by a single word. And reasonably so, for to deny them is to lack fidelity to God whom we should love above all things; therefore we should be disposed to loose all things sooner than offend Him. Thus did the Martyrs do; and now they enjoy in heaven the rewards of their sufferings. Is your faith like this? Do not you become intimidated by a word, by a scoff, or by a joke! And if this is true, how are you a Catholic?

III. Consider how our faith should be *universal* and *operative*, inasmuch as it ought to extend not alone to speculative and theoretical truths, such as the Unity and Trinity of God, etc., but also to practical truths such as the following: That mortal sin is the greatest

evil in the world * * * that blasphemy, the profanation of holidays, impurity, etc., are of their own nature mortal sins * * * that there is a hell with an eternity of torment for the wicked, etc., and that, therefore, we should avoid evil and do good. * * * Is this your faith? Do you firmly believe these practical truths of faith? Do you reflect seriously on these points?

Examine yourself attentively on the qualities of your faith, and apply a remedy to the defects you find in it.

Practice.—Pay this day one visit to a church where the Most Holy Sacrament is kept. Adore your God hidden under the Eucharistic veils, by external acts of worship, and pray to Him to revive your faith.

Ejaculation.—O Jesus! O Mary! re-enkindle my faith in me.

CHAPTER VII.

Religion and Good Order.

“Let all things be done decently, and according to order.”

(1 Cor. xiv. 40).

The Sovereign Pontiff, Pius IX., in his Brief of the 4th of September, 1869, addressed to M. Lasserre, congratulates him for having demonstrated by his history of Our Lady of Lourdes, that our most holy religion of itself alone, and unaided by any external power, *is able to preserve order* among the masses of the people. *Religionem nostram SS . . . aptissimam esse ordini servando, vi etiam submota.* This is a truth undeniably certain, as we shall prove in this chapter.

All the systems of philosophy and of moral theology, though varying in words, are, as a fact, of one accord in maintaining that the substance of all law, that the very first moral precept from which all the others are derived, consists in these words—"preserve order; *serva ordinem.*" St. Augustine teaches that the eternal law, the principle and foundation of all others, is the reason or the will of God commanding society to preserve the natural order, and to avoid disturbing it. And in fact, if we, His creatures, preserve order toward God, the Creator and Conserver, we shall fulfill all our obligations to Him. If order be preserved in the State, that is to say, if the chief magistrate and his representatives be acknowledged as lawful superiors, citizens and subjects, in that case, fulfill all their duties; in the family circle children must act similarly towards their parents—and so of the rest. What a pity that in our days men, generally speaking, do not wish to recognize the Christian religion in a practical manner—a religion that preaches, inculcates and promotes the observance of the natural law! And hence it is that soldiers, gendarmery, guards and prisons have to be multiplied. Look at Lourdes during the first six months of the year 1858.

"One of the grandest prerogatives of sovereigns," writes M. Henry Lasserre, "is the right they possess to confer favors; and whenever a King wishes to celebrate his accession to the throne, he grants an amnesty to the prisoners. The Queen of Heaven possessed a greater prerogative, and exercised it. She wished that there should be no criminal during her journey to Lourdes, and the commencement of her reign there. The apparitions of the holy Grotto occurred during two

quarters' sessions of the judiciary, and during these six months there was not a *single crime committed*, or *one criminal condemned* in the whole department. This is, we think, a fact unprecedented. During the Assizes of the month of March only one case was produced for examination; and this was one that had occurred prior to the apparitions, and ended in dismissal. The next session, which was to be held in June, had only two cases to try; and these, too, were connected with events anterior to this period."

This wonderful coincidence—this mysterious sign of invisible power which acted with such benign influence on the entire district—is a subject for reflection even for the least thoughtful mind. How was the arm of the malefactor tied down for so long a period? Was this imposture? Was it hallucination, or catalepsy? How was it that the sword of justice had not to be recurred to? Whence proceeded this peace—this truce of God *precisely during this period*? We challenge skepticism of every kind to explain it. * * * But we, who live by faith (*nos qui vivimus*), can explain it with certainty: The Queen of Heaven had passed the way, and had poured out upon the city the blessings of heaven. Oh! why is not the Catholic religion, which is the religion of the Queen of Heaven, heard, obeyed, respected and practised.

And yet, provocation to commit crime was not wanting. Some months previous churches had been robbed. And now among the rocks of Massabielle, within the enclosure of the holy Grotto many wax-lights burned in token of veneration; vases filled with natural and artificial flowers, and images of the Holy Virgin were deposited there as *ex voto* offerings, in testimony of grate-

ful recognition. Workmen had placed a small balustrade around the holy place, in order to prevent any accident that might possibly be occasioned by the involuntary and eager crush of the multitude. Many little crosses were suspended there from chains of gold. And when the cry was heard through the town, that in obedience to the Apparition, a Chapel had to be erected there, the people began to deposit money in the Grotto. Thousands of francs were there exposed in the open air, without any external protection either by day or by night; and yet, such was the respect that this place, once unknown, had inspired—such the moral effect it had produced upon souls, that there was not found in the whole town a single wretch to commit a sacrilegious theft. How explain this, except by admitting a special providence on the part of the Most Holy Virgin, who would not have the beginning of her holy pilgrimage stained by crime!

And at that time, what great respect for the authority of the Prefect, the Syndic, the Commissary of Police, the civic guards even, and those of public security, was manifested by the people, although they had been often aroused and exasperated in the highest degree! And was there any lack of due respect for the clergy, who were so slow in interesting themselves with regard to the apparitions? Ah! would that the Catholic religion were duly observed. * *

MEDITATION.

I. Consider how *the civil law alone is not sufficient to maintain order amongst the people*, because it offers rewards and inflicts punishments that are only temporal, and consequently inadequate either for the man who

observes, or for him who violates it ; and particularly because it takes cognizance of external acts alone, and cannot reach the hidden. And now internal acts, when often repeated, invariably exterminate themselves to the great disturbance of order. Look, for example, at the vindictive man, who covertly nourishes anger and hatred in his heart, suddenly transported by these occult passions into open manifestations of revenge, which too often end in homicide. Nay, more ; hidden acts of themselves disturb order despite the civil law. * * * Deduce thence the insufficiency of Justices and Carabinieri to maintain order, especially in our days.

II. Consider how *religion*, with its rewards and punishments in the life to come, with its dogma of the presence of God in every place, even in the most hidden recesses of the mind and heart, is able to accomplish this desired end. * * * Reflect, and you shall understand.

III. From this deduce *the consequence*. Honor the civil authorities as representatives of God, and fear the sword of justice ; but esteem and prize immensely more the Catholic religion, the Pope, the Bishops and the Clergy. * * * Happy are those States in which the Catholic religion is the foundation of the civil law, and the guide of the magistracy. * * * Apply all this to modern Kingdoms and States.

Practice.—Recite three *Salve Reginas* to the Queen of Heaven for our rulers.

Ejaculation.—*Ab occultis meis munda me, Domine*.—Jesus and Mary help me to purify my heart from its hidden sins.

CHAPTER VIII.

The Church and the Revolution.

“He that resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God.”—
Rom. xiii., 2.

Another of the many calumnies propagated against the Catholic religion is this, that she, by her intolerance, foments divisions and sedition amongst peoples and families: a calumny like the others. Not to give any other answer for the present, let us come to the facts of Lourdes. The Sovereign Pontiff says that by the history of the work of God it is made clearly apparent that our most holy religion is well adapted to check excitement amongst the people, even when justly aroused—*Concitatō in turbis animorum motus licet justos compescere.* * * * Let us see the proof.

The reader remembers that when, on the 21st of February, a guard met Bernadette as she left the church, and asked her in the name of the law to follow him to the Questorate, the multitude, who in the morning had seen the humble child transfigured in divine ecstasy, and who regarded her as blessed by God, and as something sacred, murmured in a threatening manner; and upon seeing the guard lay hands on her, wished to interfere, for their indignation was now aroused to the utmost. Again, while she was before the Commissary of Police, the multitude who had accompanied her thither, again became impatient because they saw her detained by that official over three-quarters of an hour. In the Commissary's hall itself were confusedly heard the cries, the shouts, and the thousand murmurs of the excited crowd. The noise seemed every moment, to be on the increase, and to assume an aspect more alarming. And still no crime was

committed by the people : they became perfectly calm as soon as they saw the little seer come out in company with her father.

But where the power of religion to calm the agitation of the people, even when they are justly excited, shines out most conspicuously, is on the occasion of 'the spoliation of the Grotto, which outrage was committed on the 4th of May. M. Jacomet, in great state, and with his bandoleer suspended at his waist, was getting ready to follow out the orders of the Prefect—namely, to plunder the Grotto. The news spread in an instant through the townspeople, and every breast was fired with indignation at this monstrous sacrilege. * * * "The Holy Virgin has condescended to descend into our midst," said they, "and work miracles; and this is the way she is received! Such conduct will surely draw down upon the guilty ones the wrath of God."

The coolest minds were excited; a mute effervescence of feeling was manifest amongst the crowd, and seemed to increase little by little. Let us note, in passing, that the clergy rendered incalculable service under the circumstances. The objects of piety, and the *ex voto* offerings deposited in the Grotto made a heap so very large as rendered it impossible for any man to remove by hand. Wherefore M. Jacomet went to M. Barioge, to hire a horse and wagon. * * *

"I do not hire out my horses for such purposes," replied the latter.

"But you cannot refuse your horses to any one that pays for them," sturdily exclaimed Jacomet.

"My horses are for post service, not for a job like this. I do not wish to have anything to do with this crime. Enter a process against me, if you will; I refuse my horses."

The Commissary went elsewhere. In all the inns; amongst all who kept post-horses for hire—and there were a great many of them at Lourdes at the time, in consequence of the approaching bathing season; amongst the private individuals, to whom he recurred in his desperation, he met with the same refusal. His situation was bitter in the extreme. The people, excited to madness, watched him go from house to house in vain, accompanied by his body-guard, and hailed with delight his successive disappointments. He heard the murmurs, the derisions, the cutting taunts of the multitude. The weight of their every scowl fell upon him with crushing power, as he made his painful, useless journey through the piazzas and streets of the city. He successively increased the sum he had offered for hiring a horse and wagon, but to no purpose. The very poorest refused, although he offered the handsome sum of thirty francs for a journey of only a few hundred metres.

On hearing this figure the crowd likened it to the thirty pieces of silver received by the traitor Judas. Finally, he met a woman who gave him the use of a horse and wagon for that sum. When the people saw this they became indignant beyond measure—the more so, because the woman was not by any means in needy circumstances.

Jacomet moved on to the Grotto. The guards led the wagon along. An immense crowd followed them in silence. They were moody and disturbed in soul, and felt the electricity of the hurricane gathering within their indignant breasts. They arrived at the Grotto; but the wagon not being able to get so far yet, was left resting at a distance.

Many and rich were the objects of devotion presented

to the Virgin of the Grotto : wax candles set to burn in beautiful candelabra, crosses, statues, pictures, coronas, necklaces, jewels, carpets, thousands of bouquets, wicker baskets filled with copper, silver and gold coins amounting to several thousand francs. The Commissary threw down the balustrade erected by the workmen at the entrance to the Grotto. He seemed disturbed ; the guards were near him, and the crowd that had followed, eyed him earnestly, but made no noisy demonstrations : still there was something to be dreaded even in this external calm. Jacomet commenced to secure the money ; then he extinguished the candles one by one ; heaped together coronas, crosses, carpets, and all other offerings with which the Grotto was filled, and handed them to the guards to carry to the wagon. The poor fellows obeyed—but with sorrow, and visible respect for the objects they touched. As the wagon was a short distance off, the work was progressing slowly. Jacomet called a boy who happened to be a little in advance of the crowd : “ You take this picture,” he said, “ and put it in the wagon.” The boy reached out his hands mechanically, but another boy close to him shouted : “ Wretch ! what are you going to do ? God will punish you ”

The boy drew back in terror, and no invitation of the Commissary could prevail upon him to advance.

The movements of the Commissary were convulsive, When he had heaped the first bundle together, deeming it of little worth, he wished to cast it into the Gave, but a murmur of indignation from the people checked his purpose. It seemed he understood that the measure of the people’s patience was now full, and that the least provocation further might cause it to overflow.

The bouquets had all been collected and deposited in the wagon. A moment later, a statuette was broken in the hands of the Commissary; and this little incident produced a terrible reaction in the multitude.

Having accomplished the spoliation of the Grotto, Jacomet wished to tear down the balustrade. He needed an axe. Some workmen who were chopping wood near by, severally refused to accommodate him. Another man who was working a little further off, was afraid to refuse him the loan of his axe, and so let him take it. Jacomet went to work, and after a few blows the balustrade, which was not solidly built, fell to the ground. The sight of this act of violence, and of the man himself who had dared to do it, worked with more terrible influence upon the minds of the people than all the other outrages: there was a threatening clamor audible. The Gave flowed there rapid and deep: only a few moments more of indiscretion on the part of the people were needed, and the unhappy Commissary had been hurled into its waters. Jacomet turned round, and showed a face pale and confused with terror. "What I do," he said, with apparent sorrow, "I do not of my own will at all; it displeases me very much indeed to be obliged to perform this disagreeable duty. I am only following the Prefect's orders; and I must needs obey higher authority, even when it is revolting. I am not responsible for this act, and you ought not take any violent measures with me."

Some voices were heard in the crowd saying: "We are quiet, and will commit no violence. We leave all in the hands of God."

Thus we see that no disturbance happened, and the Commissary was permitted to carry off the votive offer-

ings to the communal palace: the money was sent to the Syndic. In the evening, by way of protest against the Prefect's orders, an immense crowd assembled at the Grotto, filled it again with flowers, and illuminated it with wax lights, with this difference only, that each one kept his candle in his hand in order that the police might not get possession of it, and took it with him as he went away.

Next day two incidents occurred, which made a great impression on the people. The woman who had hired out her horse and wagon to the Commissary, fell from a loft and broke a rib; and the man who had given his axe to break down the balustrade of the Grotto, had both feet shattered by the falling of a beam he happened to be lifting. The Free Thinkers recognized in these occurrences an irritating and unfortunate coincidence of events; the people looked upon them as a punishment of Heaven.

And when the Grotto had been shut up, and access to it forbidden, the Justice of the Peace pronounced judgment in a manner so irritating, who was it that checked the people from rebellion? Who could have restrained his just feelings of wrath on seeing such an array of military force at the Grotto—a thing of itself alone well adapted to tire out the patience of even the most quietly disposed? Nay, more; with regard to the strangers who had come a great way with their patients, in hopes of having them cured by the waters of the holy fountain, and who, having found that they would not be allowed to approach the venerated spot, with suppliant hands asked permission of the Syndic to be allowed to do so, but were refused, and were consequently necessitated to take back the invalids with hearts transfixed

with a thousand griefs—with regard to these strangers, I ask, who kept them from rising in rebellion? The soldiers? the guards? the fear of Jacomet? Ah! if the Catholic religion had not spoken to their hearts, and made them feel their obligation of respect for established authority—alas! for the poor soldiers, the poor guards, and poor Jacomet! They would have seen in what a wretched plight an enraged multitude would have placed them. But religion spoke to their hearts, and that was enough. Oh! if the rulers of our day could only understand this truth!

MEDITATION

I. Consider *in what the intolerance of the Catholic Church consists*. It consists in condemning and hurling her thunders against every error that is opposed to the truths revealed by God, and by her proposed to our belief. And in this is there anything deserving of censure? Is it not well done? Has not the Church a right and an obligation to do so? What mother would not condemn the use of poisonous food, and remove it far from her children? Jesus Christ, her master and spouse, has done the same. “He who believes shall be saved, but he who believes not shall be condemned,” says Christ Himself; and the Church continues to say so. Learn hence wherein consists the intolerance of the Church: it is only a condemnation of every error hurtful to the eternal welfare of her children.

II. The Church, on the other hand, does not approve of *that spirit of intolerance*, which not alone does not recognize the social standing of those who are in error, but even persecutes them. This is an intolerance of an entirely different nature. The Church is full of mercy

for the individual, but intolerant of false doctrine. She acts like God Who detests our sins, but loves us as His creatures. "Death to error!" exclaims the Church with St. Augustine, "but may man live!" Has not the Church always acted so? She is indulgent with human weakness, but she has never stood, and never will stand on the side of error. Look at the Papal States as an example. Have not the Popes, even in their own Rome, always condemned the errors of Judaism, and tolerated the Jews as individuals? Dear reader, understand this truth well!!!

III. Very far from *fomenting* sedition, the Church *condemns* it, as contrary to the obedience due legitimate authority. Does not history teach you this in the past? Think and read good books and journals, and you will find such to be the case in your own time, as well. * * * The intolerance of individuals is not to be sought for in religion, and in the Church. * * * Open your eyes, reader, and you will understand me.

Practice.—Recite three *Pater nosters* for all the persecutors and calumniators of the Catholic Church.

Ejaculation.—Immaculate Mary of Lourdes, pray for us, and for the deluded calumniators of the Church.

CHAPTER IX.

The Church and the State.

"Let every soul be subject to higher powers." Rom. xiii. 1.

In our days especially, the Catholic clergy are accused of being insatiable of disposition, promoters of revolt amongst the people, enemies of authority, and sowers of discord. Such accusations are falsehoods

and calumnies—the consequence of Voltaire's theory: "Calumniate, always calumniate; something will stick." Pope Pius IX. has reproduced the answer to these calumnies from the *History of the Work of God at Lourdes*. "Certainly every one can comprehend from your history," wrote the Sovereign Pontiff to Lasserre, "that the clergy labor diligently to preserve order among the masses of the people, and to calm their excited passions. *Iisque rebus sedulo adlaborare clerum.*" That such is the case, we shall see in this chapter.

In the first place, when on the 21st of February the multitude shouted from the piazza in a threatening manner at the guard who was conducting Bernadette to the questorate, and were about to interfere, it was a priest, who, returning from church, and happening to be passing the way, made a sign to the people to be still, and counseled them to let authority have its way.

Secondly, and when it was known in the city that orders had been issued, even on the 4th of May, for the spoliation of the Grotto, was it not the Curè of Lourdes, who, aided by his assistant priests, made his voice heard amongst the excited multitude, as he had already assured the Syndic and the imperial Procurator he would do? The good pastor harangued his people in these words: "My friends, do not compromise your cause by acting disorderly. Be patient, and obey the law even though it is a bad one. If the most Holy Virgin is engaged in this matter, she well knows how to turn everything to her glory; and your acts of violence, should you commit any, would be to betray a want of faith in the efficacy of her power. Look at the martyrs: did they revolt against the Emperors? And they triumphed precisely because they did not resist."

The moral authority of the Curè was powerful, and, notwithstanding that every brain was not alone hot, but burning with indignation, and every heart fired with anger, still, although it was a mere chance, there was no disturbance in the city. And when at the grotto, while Jacomet was battering down the balustrade with the axe, the patience of the people had taken to flight, and the electricity of passion, so to speak, accumulated in them by so many injustices, so many insults to their faith and so many unbearable provocations, had exploded with the noise of a tremendous battery, whence did these words deduce their origin? "We are calm: we will offer no violence: we leave all in the hands of God"—whence, we ask, did these words deduce their origin, if not from the good offices and exhortations of the clergy? And at the time of the closing of the grotto, and of the processions, every one had good reason to fear some ebullition of passion among the outraged multitude. It is true that in every house petitions to the Emperor were being signed by one party, praying, in the name of liberty of conscience, for a revocation of the Prefect's decree; but it is true also that on three or four occasions the fences which enclosed the Grotto, were during the night broken and cast into the Gave. In vain did Jacomet endeavor to discover the believers so disrespectful of authority, who had committed this crime until now unknown in the code of French jurisprudence—namely, nocturnal prayers and the breaking of the enclosure. One evening the news spread that the Emperor, or the minister, had asked prayers from Bernadette. M. Dutour gave a shout of triumph, and got ready to save the State. Three good women who, as it appeared, had indulged in such conversations, were

dragged before the justices, and the Imperial Procurator demanded that to them should be meted out the full rigor of the French law. Despite his anger and his eloquence, the judges acquitted two of them, and fined the third only five francs. The Procurator appealed to the imperial court of Pau, but this seat of justice, laughing in ridicule at his anger, not only confirmed the acquittal of the two first women, but annulled the fine imposed on the third, and declared her free of any offence against the law. No doubt, the day this decision was known at Lourdes, the crowd that gathered around the limits of the enclosure, was immense. They shouted: Victory! They could not contain themselves, and in their enthusiasm crossed the barriers in compact bodies, regardless of the calls and frightened appeals of the guards. The police disconcerted by the affront their dignity had suffered at Pau, and terrified in presence of these thousands, drew back and allowed a free pass to the torrent of human beings. Next day the orders and remonstrances of the Prefect came to nerve the police for further action, prescribing, at the same time, more severe measures. The forces were increased: there were some rumors of *dismissal* afloat, and the rigor redoubled.

Well then, with a population so numerous and excited, what would have become of public order and safety, had not the clergy, and especially the pastor, who was loved and venerated by every one, raised their voices in favor of peace and quiet, and labored, to a man, to curb their aroused passions by the most potent aid of Catholic truth? The example given in the little sermon noted above, was certainly turned to account in every word. Rebellion against authority, even when it

is in fault, is not approved by the Church. Religion condemns violence ; and the Catholic clergy never cease to spread this doctrine among the people.

Dear reader, draw from this chapter the following

MEDITATION.

I. Consider how the Catholic clergy, in regard of the mistakes and errors of the legitimate civil authority, *never sacrifice their principles*. What is true, is true ; what is just, is just ; what is legitimate, is legitimate : but falsehood, injustice, usurpation, sacrilegious theft, receive also their fitting appellations. And in this the clergy conform to the Catholic religion, which abominates and condemns error, wherever found ; nor can they act otherwise without denying the faith, and betraying their divine ministry. Open your eyes, and glance around far and near, and you will see, dear reader, that the Catholic clergy always regulate their conduct in this way. Does not this move you to reverence and venerate them ?

II. Consider how the clerical body submits to *oppression* without sacrificing the principles of justice and honesty. Go, in fancy, to Russia and Poland, and to other countries as well, and read or hear what the Sovereign Pontiff, the Bishops, and the Priests say. * * * But they never have recourse to violence ; never excite the people to arms ; but on the contrary, when popular feeling is aroused, use all their power to bring about a calm. * * * Admire their patience !

III. Consider how the Catholic clergy, like Jesus on the cross, *pray for, and bless their oppressors*. Read the prayers they recite on Good Friday for all, even for public sinners, and for the excommunicated, etc. At

other seasons of the year the excommunicated are not prayed for publicly in the churches, although they have a place in the inmost recesses of the hearts of the clergy, who never fail to pray for them in private. * * * Did you know the prayers that the Priests, Bishops, and especially the Pope, pour forth for their enemies and persecutors * * the benedictions they bestow upon them !

Practice.—Recite to-day five *Pater nosters*, that Heaven may preserve virtue in the Catholic clergy.

Ejaculation.—*Interveni pro Clero.* Immaculate Mary of Lourdes, pray for the clergy.

CHAPTER X.

The Ignorant Clergy in Connection with the Facts of Lourdes.

“Believe not every spirit, but try the spirits if they be of God.”
St. John, iv., 1.

Another calumny against the clergy is that they are ignorant, enemies of light and progress, promoters of superstition. From the facts of Lourdes quite the contrary is apparent, as Pope Pius IX. said to Henry Las-serre : “It appears from your history, that the clergy, far from being abettors of superstition, are always slower and more rigid than others in pronouncing judgment on facts that seem to exceed the powers of nature—*Clerum adeo abesse a superstitione fovenda ut imo segniores se præbeat ac severiores aliis omnibus in judicio edendo de factis, quæ naturæ vires excedere videntur.*”

In this chapter we will consider especially the reserve of the “ignorant” clergy during the period of the apparitions ; in the next, we will speak of the cautious course pursued by the Bishop.

Scarce had the news of the apparitions at the grotto, bearing as they did upon religion, spread through the city of Lourdes, than the clergy, as was natural, became the most prepossessed and interested party concerning them. Still, with wonderful tact and good sense, they observed the most reserved and prudent neutrality. That the fact had soon engaged the attention of the public, was undeniable ; but what was the cause of this ? The Skeptics and Free Thinkers looked upon the apparitions in one light only—namely, imposition ; the clergy, on the other hand, held a different view. The fact could possibly be natural, and in this case, its cause might be imposture, or some very unusual malady : but it could also be supernatural, and so the necessity arose to determine whether it owed its origin to diabolical, or to divine agency. God has His miracles, and the devil, his wonders. Such is the teaching of the Church ; and the clergy knowing this, therefore resolved to study the matter carefully in every its most minute circumstance. Hence, from the very outset, they received with the utmost diffidence the report of so surprising a fact. Nevertheless, it could be of divine origin, and so they would not presume to judge of it lightly.

The child, whose name had suddenly become so celebrated in the town, was perfectly unknown to the priests of the city. During the fifteen days since she had returned to her father's house, she had attended the catechism class, but the Ecclesiastic engaged to explain the Christian doctrine to the girls, had not yet noticed her. He might possibly have put her a question once or twice, but he did not know her name, nor was her person imprinted on his memory. Since then, the entire population was already running to the Grotto, he, wishing to

know her, called her by name, about the third day of the fortnight demanded by the Apparition. At the name of Bernadette Soubirous there arose in great humility a little girl, poor and meanly clad, who attracted attention not less by her simplicity, than by her extreme ignorance of everything relating to religion.

The parish was at this time under the administration of the Abbe Peyramale, a man bordering on fifty years of age, and who had been for two years pastor and foreign Vicar of the city and Canton of Lourdes. He was a man whom nature had formed with coarse habits, and perhaps, with a temper subject too often to fits of anger, but whom grace had toned down and softened. He was an irreconcilable enemy of vice, an apostle of the pulpit, a man regardless of self, but ever ready to be all to all, the very impersonation of beneficence—qualities of mind and heart that elicited the respect and love of the good, and the fear of the wicked. The Free Thinkers would say of him: “the Abbe is not always gentle, but he is charitable, and not attached to money. Notwithstanding his cassock, he is the very best of men.”

From the very first moment he had heard the apparitions spoken of, before granting his assistant clergymen permission to go to the Grotto, and even before he went there himself, he resolved to wait until the facts related should have taken a definite character in one way or another, and the ecclesiastical authority pronounced judgment concerning them. Hence, while he instructed some intelligent and trustworthy laymen to go to the Grotto every time that Bernadette went, and report to him each day all that had happened there, he formally prohibited all the priests subject to his jurisdiction to be seen there, and he kept away himself. Mons. Lau-

rence, Bishop of Tarbes, approved of this prudent step, and moreover, forbade all the ecclesiastics in his diocese to mix themselves, under any pretext, in the matter of the Grotto. Wherefore, whenever a priest went to the tribunal of penance or elsewhere for counsel regarding the pilgrimage to the Grotto, his answer was ready:—“We do not go there, and so cannot pronounce judgment upon matters which we do not sufficiently understand. But it is evidently lawful for each one of the faithful to go there and examine every thing, since the ecclesiastical authority has not yet interposed in the least. Go or not, we cannot either counsel or prohibit you.”

It happened, certainly, that some priest, having felt somewhat impatient about the matter, or having been pressed by the people, or moved by a natural curiosity that was legitimate, asked the pastor's permission to go to the Grotto. But Abbe Peyramale replied with firmness: “It is not suitable. We should not interfere in the matter unless it become manifest that some heresy or superstition may spring from it. If it be the work of God, He, in His omnipotence, does not stand in need of us to effect its triumph; but if it be not the work of God, rest assured that the time will come when He will let us know that it devolves upon us as a duty, to do battle in His name. In a word, let us leave all to Providence.”

And so, not a single priest went to the Grotto during the term of the apparitions; the matter was allowed to progress on its own merits, and no one could say that the hand of man had ever taken part in it.

Nay, Abbe Peyramale did yet more. When, on the 23d of February, Bernadette, in the name of the Apparition, presented herself before him, he, wishing to make

a first examination of the case for himself, received her with a diffidence stern and severe.—“Are not you,” he said, “the daughter of Soubirous, the miller?”

“Yes, I am, Rev. Father,” replied the humble messenger of the Most Holy Virgin.

“Very well, Bernadette, what business have you with me? * * * What do you come here to do?”—reprehensions, not unaccompanied by asperity of utterance, while at the same time he fixed upon the child a look, whose cold reserve and severe scrutiny would have disconcerted a mind that was in the least uncertain of its belief.

“Rev. Father, I have come, on the part of the Lady who appears to me in the Grotto of Massabielle—” “Ah! yes,” replied the priest, suddenly interrupting her; “yes, it is well-known to me that you pretend to have visions and are running around the town with your stories. What does all this mean? What happened to you a few days ago? What are all these wonderful things you speak of, but do not prove?”

Bernadette was pained, and certainly, in her innocence, was astonished at the severity of the pastor, who was always so good, so paternal, and so sweet to all his parishioners, especially to the poor and the little ones. Nevertheless, although the well-spring of her heart had been somewhat checked in its flow, she felt not discomposed, and gave a simple narrative of all the apparitions. The man of God was deeply moved by such simplicity and innocence, but did violence to his feelings. Had he been a private individual, he would, perchance, have said, “I believe you;” but having been the pastor of a numerous flock, and the guardian of truth, he had force of character strong enough to keep

his emotions in check, and to show a stern and severe expression of countenance in presence of the child.

“Do you not know the name of the Lady?”

“No sir; she has not told me who she is.”

“The parties who believe you, imagine that she is the Blessed Virgin Mary. But have you well considered,” he added, gravely, and in a tone apparently threatening, “that if you falsely pretend that you see the Mother of God in the Grotto, you are running the high road never to see her in heaven? Here, you say that you alone see her. Above, if you are telling lies in this world, the other people will see her, while you, in punishment of your fraud, shall be ever far from her—ever in hell.”

“I do not know if she is the Holy Virgin, Rev. Father,” replied the child; but I see the Vision as I see you, and she speaks to me as you do, and I am come to tell you, on her part, that she wishes a Chapel to be erected in her honor amid the Rocks of Massabielle, where she appears to me.”

The pastor looked at the child as she gave expression, with such perfect certainty, to this formal demand, and could not repress a smile. The idea that she was under illusion, was uppermost in his mind, and so he got her to repeat the precise words the Lady had used.—“After having confided to me a secret, which concerns me alone, and which I cannot reveal to any one,” said Bernadette, “the Lady added, ‘and now go tell the priests that I wish a Chapel to be erected here in my honor.’”

The priest was silent for a moment. Finally, he thought that such might be the case; and the very idea that the Mother of God had sent him, a poor, unknown priest, a direct embassy, filled his mind with agitation.

Then fixing his eyes steadily on the child, he asked himself: "But where is this child's guarantee, and what proof does she give me that it is not the allurements of some error?" "If the Lady in question," he replied, "is really the Queen of Heaven, I am surely most happy to use all my exertions to have the Chapel built in her honor; but your statement does not produce certainty. Nothing obliges me to believe you. I do not know who this Lady is, and before I engage in her interests I wish to know if she has a right to what she demands. Ask her, therefore, to give me some proof of her power."

The window happened to be open, and the Curè turning his gaze towards the garden with its dead growth of vegetation—for it was Winter, suddenly received an idea. * * * "You say that the Apparition stands upon the wild rose-bush that is growing from a fissure in the rock. We are now in the month of February. Tell the Lady from me that if she wishes the chapel to be erected she must make the rose-bush flower." And he dismissed the child.

This dialogue between the Curè and the little girl was soon known in all its particulars; and it became the subject of various commentaries. As for us, it is our duty only to note the extreme prudence of the Pastor of Lourdes in managing this matter. And, dear reader, I ask is it not true that his conduct in the business was quite the reverse of fomenting sedition?

Let us proceed. Next day, on her way from the Grotto, Bernadette called on the Curè, who immediately interrogated her.

"Well, have you seen the Lady to-day also? What has she said to you?"

"I have seen her, and I have said to her: 'the Rev.

Pastor requires you to give some proof, for example, to make the rose-bush beneath your feet flower, because my words are not sufficient for the priests, and they do not wish to confide in me.' Then she smiled, but spoke not. Next she told me to pray for sinners, and commanded me to descend to the bottom of the Grotto, exclaiming three times—'penance, penance, penance!' which I also repeated, dragging myself along on my knees down into the depths of the Grotto. There she revealed to me a second personal secret, and then disappeared."

"And what did you find in the depths of the Grotto?"

"I looked about me after the Lady disappeared (because while she is present I can attend to nothing beside, she so completely absorbs me) and saw nothing except the rocks, and on the ground a few blades of grass growing from the mold."

The priest remained thoughtful, and said to her: "Let us wait."

And what else could he do? What else did prudence require?"

On the 2d of March, Bernadette went to the Curé to speak to him a second time in the name of the Apparition. * * * "The Lady wishes," she said, "that a Chapel be built, and that processions be made to the Grotto."

Then the pastor believed, and went to inform the Bishop of the matter, for prudence required such a course. The facts spoke for themselves: the fountain, and the cures so generally noised abroad, that had been worked by its waters, made it apparent that Bernadette was right. Nevertheless, he well knew how to restrain his enthusiasm, and did not revoke the prohibition

issued to his assistant priests forbidding them to go to the Grotto. Now, was there any precipitation in a course of conduct like this? Did it foment superstition? It may be that the good man had already prayed in his heart to the Virgin of the Grotto who, although she had not vouchsafed to give her name, had still made herself sufficiently known by her maternal beneficence. But he was determined to use prudence and caution.

It is true that his prudence had been often put to so severe a test that it seemed almost impossible for him not to depart from the course he had adopted,—as for example when he was called upon to defend Bernadette in order that she might not be arrested and confined in a lunatic asylum. Again when some boys, at the time of the closing of the Grotto, pretended that they, too, had seen strange apparitions, having been urged to this course, in all probability, by the police in order to lessen the force of the genuine visions, he expelled them in disgrace from the Sunday-school, declaring that if the like were repeated, even once, he would, on his own responsibility, make a strict investigation in order to discover the real instigators: and all these pretences stopped immediately. His reserve was put to another test about the termination of the apparitions. The wonderful cures had so increased in number that the whole population were aroused to enthusiasm. The crowds that gathered together were innumerable, and from all quarters demands were made for the ecclesiastical authority to give some decision. The Bishop remained silent; and therefore, the Curé could not, and would not speak, although he had already believed in the reality of the apparitions.

You believe, my reader, that what the pastor and the

other clergymen of Lourdes did regarding the apparitions was right to be done, and that all priests generally follow the same course ; make then the following

MEDITATION ON CHRISTIAN PRUDENCE.

1. Consider *what prudence is*. It is a cardinal virtue which teaches what ought to be done in any particular case, as right, and what ought to be avoided, as evil. The truly prudent man, therefore, before taking action, reflects and consults ; next determines his line of conduct definitely ; and finally acts as he has resolved. An enemy to precipitation and too much haste in deciding and acting, he aims, too, at avoiding irresolution and scrupulosity—blushes not to take counsel in his doubts ; hence it is very difficult for him to err in any matter. Such is the prudence that the Catholic clergy preach—such the prudence they endeavor to practice. Do you act thus ?

II. Consider *the necessity of this virtue of Christian prudence*. “Be you prudent as serpents,” is our Lord’s command in the Holy Gospel (Matt. x. 16), and often in the Sacred Scriptures is it repeated. Prudence is the science of the saints, the regulator of life, the mistress of good customs, the first fountain of all duty, teach the Holy Fathers of the Church. And do not natural reason and daily experience point out to you clearly the deplorable evils caused by imprudence ? Is it not from a want of prudence that you have so often fallen into grave mistakes and enormous crimes ?

III. Consider how *indispensable* this virtue is in regard to *extraordinary things touching on religion*—that is to say, when judgment is to be given on supernatural facts. The Church commands extreme prudence to be

used in this case, and exhorts us to take counsel of well-balanced intellects and to form our judgments with mature deliberation, and with a slowness whose fruit is illumination of the mental vision. * * * She requires us to enter upon a course of deep study, to seek cogent proofs—in fact, to have recourse to every means in order to discover the truth. * * * What a wonderful prudence! What an example worthy of imitation! Do you act in this manner? Are you not one of those who *imprudently* believe in dreams, etc.? Are you not, what is still worse, one of those who do not wish to consult pious, learned and prudent persons, * * especially the ministers of the Church, on questions of religion?

Resolve henceforth, to be prudent in your words and in your actions.

Practice.—Commence from this very day to think always before you give utterance to any sentiment you may wish to manifest.

Ejaculation.—*Virgo prudentissima, ora pro nobis.* Most prudent and Immaculate Virgin, pray for us.

CHAPTER XI.

A New St. Thomas, Apostle.

“Be not faithless, but believing.” (John xx. 27).

If the Clergy and the Pastor of Lourdes acted prudently in the case of the apparitions, it is due in great measure to the inspirations and counsel of the Bishop of the diocese.

At that time the Episcopal See of Tarbes was occupied by Mons. Bertrand Severe Laurence, who died in

Rome in the year 1870, during the Ecumenical Council of the Vatican. He had formerly been Superior of the small diocesan Seminary, and afterwards of the grand Seminary. He was subsequently appointed Vicar-General of the diocese, and finally called to the See of Tarbes by the unanimous desire of the clergy and people. For twelve years he had been their Bishop, and consequently for about forty years had directed his clergy, who loved and respected him as a father, while he, in turn, from his inmost soul reciprocated their feelings with paternal tenderness. However, if his heart was warm, his head was very cool; and if the former was regulated by sentiment, the latter subjected its every act to the most rigorous examen of cool reason. Before taking action he attentively weighed, not only the case in point, but also its circumstances and consequences; wherefore was he slow in coming to a conclusion, not through any indecision of character, but from the effect of prudence. Well could the Gospel saying he applied to him: "Be ye prudent as the serpent, and simple as the dove." In the treatment of extraordinary occurrences, especially, he was an apostle—but a diplomatic apostle—nay, more, he was, as Lasserre calls him, an apostle, a holy apostle, but still the Apostle St. Thomas: before he believed, he wished to touch.

Hence it is that when the Pastor of Lourdes informed him of the extraordinary occurrences at the Grotto, Mons. Laurence was not slow in taking a proper stand. He neither denied nor admitted the facts related. He assumed that state of mind which philosophers call *methodical doubt*, and which Cartesius declares to be the best mental condition to start with in search of truth.

Wherefore, if on the one side he confirmed the prohibition issued by the Curè, forbidding the priests of Lourdes to go at all to the Grotto, and extended it to the entire diocese, thereby to keep far away all suspicion of clerical influence in the matter ; on the other, he acted in concert with the Curè, to the end that he would, as resolved, by means of reliable and irreprehensible witnesses, keep himself posted day after day on all that happened at the Grotto. Could he have adopted a more prudent course ?

When then the Prefect, in the name and by the counsel of Minister Rouland, recurred to the Bishop telling him advisedly that the facts of Lourdes were superstitions; that the Grotto could be legally closed, in as much as it had been converted into a sort of chapel, because, according to the French law, no one can open an oratory, or any public place of worship, without the combined authorization of the civil and the ecclesiastical power; that it was expedient to check the young visionary in going to the Grotto, and not tolerate a state of things which was sure to serve as a pretext for new attacks against the clergy and religion (letter of M. Rouland to Prefect Massy, Apr. 12, 1858)—when the Prefect, we say, came to tell him this story, the Bishop soon grasped two ideas: 1st. That the civil authority wished the clergy to act according to its dictation ; but Mons. Laurence had too high an esteem of his pastoral duties to become its tool: 2d. That perhaps the Minister, but certainly the Prefect, was bent on having recourse to violence, and thus confront force against reason ; and this it was necessary to avoid. Wherefore, without departing from the prudent reserve he had resolved upon, and without precipitating a judgment, he simply gave instructions to the

Pastor of Lourdes not to absolutely forbid Bernadette to return to the Grotto, for this would be to violate liberty of conscience, which is sacred, and which the churchman knows how to respect, even in a child; but to counsel her strongly not to return there unless she felt called by the voice of heaven and moved on by an irresistible power, in order not to afford a pretext to the civil authority to enter upon the dangerous path of persecution, towards which the clear-sighted Bishop most certainly saw it incline.

Meantime, the month of April had set in. The Prefect's suit against the Bishop regarding the stables had arisen. The Bishop had got a verdict, and the Prefect, in order to pour out in an indirect way, his bile against the Ordinary delivered on the first of May, his famous discourse to the Syndics of the Canton of Lourdes; caused the Grotto to be plundered, and endeavored to secure the arrest of Bernadette: and the Bishop let him have his way. It was now about the first of June. The bathing season was approaching. The closing of the Grotto had been ordered. Legal proceedings had been taken, and sentence of condemnation pronounced: but the Bishop remained silent the while, and studied facts.

On the 3d of June, Bernadette made her first Communion, and soon after fell sick, worried, no doubt, by the incessant visits of strangers who came to have her relate her story of the apparitions. The Bishop took advantage of her indisposition in order to have her removed from Lourdes, and for this end advised the parents to send her to the waters of Cauterets—thus to take away from the city the great centre that had so engaged the popular mind. Accordingly, Bernadette

was sent to the baths, where she remained two or three weeks, in company with her aunt, who defrayed all expenses, which were trifling at this season of the year.

But Bernadette returned home about the end of June. Strangers, bathers, travelers, and the inquisitive from all the surrounding towns were going to the baths, and were, therefore, assembling in Lourdes. The natives and the strangers began to murmur against the Bishop and the clergy, as if it was through weakness or fear they had not dared to interfere in the matter of the apparitions; and the discontent became general.

“If the apparitions are false,” said the people of the diocese of Tarbes, “is it not the Bishop’s duty to instruct the faithful, and put a stop to error? And if they are true, why does he not oppose the persecution of the faithful, and courageously defend the work of God against the malice of men?”

“We are far from the place,” the strangers added, “and cannot know with certainty the truth of the case. Why do not these good priests speak? Why do they not tell us in time, whether we ought to believe, or disbelieve the current reports?”

And matters proceeded to such a pitch, that notwithstanding the great respect entertained for the character and person of the Bishop, popular feeling had begun to assume an anti-ecclesiastical aspect. Different Bishops and distinguished personages united in urging Mons. Laurence to give a decision. Pressed so from every side, he finally issued a pastoral on the 28th of July, by virtue of which he created an inquisitory commission to examine the facts of the Grotto: we will treat of this in the third part of our book.

And now, dear reader, you who have dispassionately

run over this chapter, tell me if I have not very suitably inserted it in this second part, in which we have reviewed the trials of the work of God at Lourdes. The Bishop, too, seems to combat the works of God! Incredible, yet true! But what would have been the consequence, had he immediately believed? Divine Providence had certainly its views in disposing the Bishop of Tarbes to act so leisurely. * * * And, in fact, such is the rule of the Church when she has to deal with matters that may possibly be supernatural. * * * And shall it still be said that the ministers of the sanctuary favor superstitions? Acknowledge here that the clergy act most rigorously and slowly in pronouncing judgment on facts that may possibly be supernatural, as the Sovereign Pontiff expresses it, and make the following

MEDITATION ON THE REASONABLENESS OF FAITH.

I. Consider the *condescension with which Jesus Christ treated the Apostle St. Thomas*. He had said he would not believe the Resurrection of his Divine Master unless he was assured of it by his sight and touch. And Jesus appears to him after the resurrection, and invites him to put his finger into the holes the nails had made in His hands and feet, and his hand into the spear-gash in His sacred side. What condescension! He, therefore, does not wish us to believe blindly the truths of faith; and, far from prohibiting, He, in fact, counsels study and examination, in order that we may become convinced of their dogmatic certainty. * * * Do you act so, my reader? Do you labor to repel doubts on faith by study, and by taking counsel? Are you not one of those who call themselves skeptics, while in reality they are simply ignorant?

II. Consider the words of the Saviour: *be not faithless, but believing*. Incredulity displeases God as much as our faith pleases Him; and reasonably so, because it offends His infinite veracity and infallibility. It displeases Him also, inasmuch as it is an act against reason, with which He has endowed us: and, indeed, reason itself teaches that we should believe even incomprehensible things from an infallible person. * * * Are you skeptical in this sense? And if so, are you not unreasonable besides?

III. Consider the *consequence* of this condescension evinced by Jesus Christ toward the Apostle St. Thomas, and of the words in which He addressed him. The conclusion deducible therefrom is, that we should be moved thereby to study our most holy religion as well for our own private good as for the welfare of our neighbor. Look at St. Thomas: by his apparent incredulity he gave an occasion to the Divine Redeemer to illuminate him, and at the same time to enlighten and convince all Christians regarding the truth of His resurrection. And in accordance with this, St. Gregory teaches that the incredulity of St. Thomas is of more benefit to us than the faith of the believing disciples, because it has fortified our minds in the faith. Admiring the bounty of God, draw thence this conclusion, viz.: that He permits us to examine the truths of faith, and assists us by convenient proofs to become convinced of them; and remember you shall be perfectly inexcusable if you do not profit thereby.

Practice.—Meditate for one quarter of an hour on the reasonableness of our faith.

Ejaculation.—*Virgo fidelis, ora pro nobis.* Immaculate Virgin of Lourdes, who wert so faithful, pray for us.

CHAPTER XII.

Minister Rouland.

“He wrote also letters full of blasphemy against the Lord.”

2 Paral., xxxii. 17.

The last assault on the work of God at Lourdes was made by M. Rouland, Minister of Public Instruction and Worship. The Prefect and the Commissary of Police had in their reports to the Minister, exaggerated many circumstances touching the facts that had occurred at the Grotto. They had travestied them, and, as was said at Lourdes and all around, had even promoted burlesque performances; and this is how they worked:

After the last apparition with which Bernadette had been favored—that is, from the date of the 16th of July onward—on three or four occasions some children and some women pretended that they had seen visions like Bernadette. Was this the truth? Was it the devil who was trying to bring discredit on the works of God by the manifestation of wonders of his own? The people with their thousand eyes steadily fixed on all the circumstances, saw in them so many dark contrivances of the police to bring the miracles of the Grotto into disrepute; and this opinion took a strong hold on the minds of the inhabitants of Lourdes and of all the surrounding towns. The two or three boys who pretended that they had seen apparitions, mixed up with their accounts—incoherent enough of themselves—all sorts of extravagances. One day they applied a ladder to the timber fence which closed in the Grotto, and under the pretext of offering their services to the pilgrims, of touching the water for them, of putting their rosaries in

contact with the holy rock, they received and appropriated the articles presented. It is very remarkable that Jacomet, who could so very easily have had them arrested, did not interfere with them at all. He did not seem to know anything about these strange scenes, these ecstasies, these violations of the decree. He was never present while these things were occurring. All this attracted the notice of the multitude, who said openly and fearlessly : “ Baron Massy, seeing that public opinion is going against him, and being now convinced by experience that he cannot by any power of his arrest the progress of the work of God, is endeavoring to bring dishonor on it at the outset by abetting visionaries, to whom he will afterwards give great notoriety in the newspapers, and whom he will bring under the notice of the government itself.”

The Pastor of Lourdes, moved by these scandals, expelled the boys in disgrace from the Sunday-school, declaring that if the like should happen even once more, he would himself make a strict inquiry in order to discover the real instigators. Wonderful power of the Curè ! The vision ceased *ipso facto*.

Towards the close of July the Bishop of Tarbes received a ministerial despatch from M. Rouland, touching precisely on the reports he had heard from the Minister, regarding the facts of Lourdes, from which it appeared that many scandals were occurring at the Grotto : *women of doubtful character, boys who mimic the priests, grotesque ceremonies, etc.*, and terminating by asking the Mons. Bishop *if he did not deem it expedient to publicly censure such profanations.*

Who does not see in this a crafty attack upon the work of God ? Disturbances are created, in order to

have a pretext for smothering it *in toto*. . . . And the Bishop is called upon to issue his condemnation.

Monsignore immediately replied to the Minister, laying before him the real state of things, placing the case in its true light, and depicting it in its proper colors.

The Minister had said to the Bishop, "condemn," but the Bishop frankly replied, "I will examine," and called M. Rouland's attention to the lately issued pastoral, by virtue of which he had appointed an examining Commission, to deliberate on the question of Lourdes, in accordance with whose decision he would pronounce judgment.

The Minister saw his mistake, and said no more.

Observe here, reader, the imprudence, not to say the impudence, of those wiseacres of the world. M. Rouland had himself written to the Prefect about the commencement of June, to put a stop at any cost to the *superstition*, as he termed it. Alas! poor worldly wisdom! But, what if, instead of being a superstition, it is a true apparition—a true miracle—truly a work of God? Is it, then, prudent to condemn it without examination, to stifle it without knowing its nature? Is it fair to *stop it at any cost*? Do you, then, mean to command God? If not, you assert* that, at the desire of the King, God has forbidden the working of miracles here!!!

But it is written: There is no wisdom, there is no prudence, there is no counsel that can prevail against the Lord (Prov. xxi., 30); it is written of the Divine Wisdom that it reacheth from end to end mightily, and ordereth all things sweetly (Wisdom viii., 1); it is

* È da parte del Re a Dio proibito
Di miracoli fare in questo sito!!!

written, too,—I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and the prudence of the prudent I will reject (1 Cor. 1, 19). As the work of God leveled with the dust every other obstacle raised against it, so, too, did it resist and overcome the attacks of the Minister. Nay, more; the Sovereign Pontiff, in his Brief to Henry Lasserre, to which we have more than once called the reader's attention, says that Divine Providence is accustomed to employ worldly malice and audacity in order to make His works shine out more brilliantly; and this we shall see in the following part.

For the present, let us conclude by making this

MEDITATION ON BLASPHEMY.

I. Consider *what blasphemy is*. It is to speak contumeliously against God. 1st. It is *an utterance* of the mind or of the heart, and is, therefore, internal; or of the mouth, and then it is external. Hence we see that blasphemy can be committed in both these manners. 2d. It is *contumelious*, for as God is everywhere, any word spoken against Him is stamped with an oral contempt of His presence. 3d. It is *against God* viewed either in Himself or in His creatures, inasmuch as they bear relation to Him, or possess some divine perfection. Hence it is a blasphemy to utter words derogatory to the honor of the Most Holy Virgin, Mother of God, or of the Saints who are the friends of God. Bear in mind this definition of blasphemy, and examine your conscience to see if you have ever been guilty of it.

II. Consider *the ways in which blasphemy is committed*. They are chiefly four. 1st. To attribute to God a quality He has not, or to deny Him a quality peculiarly His own. 2d. By assigning to creatures an attribute which

belongs to God alone—for example, omnipotence, infinite beauty, infinite goodness, etc. 3d. When the attributes which God possesses are spoken of disparagingly, or with mockery. 4th. When the Saints, holy things, such as the Sacraments, the Gospels, etc., are disrespectfully spoken of, or undervalued. It would also be blasphemy—although improperly so called, nevertheless a most heinous crime—to dishonor God or His Saints by any irreverent treatment of their holy images. Are not you guilty in some one of these ways? Have you not at least often taken the names of God, of the Most Holy Virgin, and of the Saints in vain?

III. Consider *the gravity of the crime of blasphemy*. St. Thomas says that blasphemy committed in the first mentioned manner, namely, through hatred of God, is of all others the most enormous crime (2. 2. q. 13. art. 3.); St. Jerome declares that every other crime is light when weighed in the balance against blasphemy, and St. Augustine teaches that blasphemy is a more heinous crime than the Deicide committed by the Jews. Hence we see why it is that God in the old law commanded that the blasphemer should be stoned to death by the infuriated people—nor was there the slightest chance of pardon for such a culprit (Lev. xxiv); and in every age has He fulminated the thunders of His severest judgments against those who have been guilty of blasphemy. . . . The Most Holy Madonna wept over this crime at Salette. . . . Enter into yourself, dear reader, and if your conscience, as I hope, reproves you not in this regard, excite yourself to detest from your heart the bare mentioning of the name of God in vain. Resolve, too, to correct rigorously, and on the moment, your dependents, friends and acquaintances, etc., and acquire

the habit of repairing by devout and fervent ejaculations, the injury inflicted on the honor of God by blasphemy.

Practice.—Recite the series of ejaculations commencing with the words: *May God be blessed*, etc.

Ejaculation.—May the names of Jesus and Mary be always praised.

PART III.

THE TRIUMPHS OF THE WORK OF GOD AT LOURDES.

INTRODUCTION.

Dear reader, as much as you have been pained by the contemplation of the trials of every kind, which were brought about by the prudence or the malice of men, in order to mar the divine work of Lourdes, so much now will you be consoled by assisting at its triumphs. Yes, it is time for the dark clouds that have brooded over us so long to pass away, and the gladsome light of the sun to illuminate our skies—and this glorious change in the scenes we are describing we shall see to our great consolation, in the perusal of this third part of our history.

CHAPTER I.

Liberty of Prayer.

“By me kings reign.” Prov. viii., 15.

Whilst the work of God at Lourdes was abandoned by the Clergy and the Bishop, and left to struggle alone

with enemies of every kind; whilst the Prefect, the Commissary of Police, and the Minister himself, sought to stamp it out by measures the most violent, arbitrary and brutal; whilst the libertine press of all Europe attacked, and the good Catholic papers defended it; whilst, in a word, the cause of God seemed lost to hope—to such an extent, in fact, that the Bishop of Tarbes, although having instituted an Examining Commission which was immediately to enter upon its labors, had by a countermand, suspended its entering in session, precisely because of the difficulties which he saw threatening its free action, there was a powerful man in France, who had not so far interfered in any way in the matter of Lourdes, and who, no matter what his religious, philosophic and political ideas might have been, was perfectly impartial. Whether the apparitions were true, or false, was a matter of indifference to him. He was not interested in either hypothesis; and, therefore, could, and ought to deal reasonably with justice and truth. He would not violate justice, or outrage truth, except to gain something in the way of fortune, or to gratify his ambition or his pride. This man was Napoleon III., Emperor of the French.

Phlegmatic by nature, mute as the granite Sphinxes that kept guard at the portals of Thebes, he kept track of the polemical attitude of the journals regarding the facts of Lourdes, calmly viewing the contest oscillate in the balance, and waiting for the public conscience, so to say, to give him its decision.

It was precisely at this time—about the middle of September, that Mons. Salinis, Archbishop of Auch, and another distinguished gentleman of the town, went together to see the Emperor, who, at the time, was at

Biarritz. Meantime, Napoleon had received petitions from different parties praying him, in virtue of the most sacred rights of citizens, to revoke immediately Baron Massy's extreme and arbitrary measures.

One of the petitions ran thus: "Sire, we do not pretend, by any means, to decide the question of the apparitions of the Virgin, although in consequence of the wonderful miracles, which all in this town assert they have themselves witnessed, every one believes in the reality of these supernatural manifestations. One thing is certain and beyond all question—namely, that the spring, which gushed forth unexpectedly, and whose absolute hurtlessness scientific analysis proclaims, has still been closed against us, although no person has ever suffered any evil therefrom: nay, it is equally certain that very many assert that they have regained their health by the use of its water. In the name of the rights of conscience, which are independent of all human power, permit the faithful to go there to pray if they think fit. In the name of the most simple dictates of humanity, let the sick be free to go there in order to recover their health, if such is their hope. In the name of liberty of intellect, allow persons of intelligence who are seeking for light to illuminate them in their study and examination, to have free access there that they may be able to detect error, or discover the truth."

The Emperor had not up to this known the entire truth, because certainly Minister Rouland had no intention of ever manifesting it to him: it was at Biarritz that this flood of light flowed in upon his mind. It is well known that Napoleon III. was not a communicative monarch: seldom did he reveal his thoughts by a word;

it was by work they were manifested. Seeing the absurd acts of violence by means of which the Minister, the Prefect, and their agents were, as far as in them lay, bringing discredit upon the imperial power, his eyes threw off their false coloring, and became illuminated, so to say, by a flash of cool anger. He shrugged his shoulders convulsively, and the lowerings of profound uneasiness passed across his brow. He pulled the bell violently. * * * * "Take this to the Telegraph Office," he said. * * * * It was a short despatch to the Prefect of Tarbes, commanding him, in the Emperor's name, instantly to revoke the decree regarding the Grotto of Lourdes, and to give freedom to the people.

The theory of the electric spark which, by means of the wires that thread the world over, is sent with the rapidity of lightning from pole to pole, is known to every body. The telegraph, as scientists tell us, is nothing else than the electricity of the heavens. On that day, Baron Massy was of the same mind with men of science. The imperial telegram falling suddenly before him, troubled and overwhelmed him as much as the unexpected descent of a thunderbolt upon his house could have done. He could not believe his eyes. The more he reflected, the more did it seem impossible for him to retract publicly. Nevertheless, he must swallow the bitter pill, or hand in his resignation. Fatal alternative! I must say that the hearts of public officials have very often to suffer extreme pain.

In the vague hope, however, that the Emperor would tone down his decision, he wrote to him on the matter, interposing at the same time, M. Rouland as a mediator. Napoleon was regardless of both; nay, more; this very step gave him to understand that the Prefect had dared

to misunderstand his orders, and defer their execution. He sent another despatch from Biarritz, conceived in terms that allowed of neither comment, nor delay. Baron Massy had now only to choose between his pride and his office. He made the painful choice, and it was sufficiently humiliating for him to continue Prefect.

He next endeavored to conceal his defeat, and not give up his colors publicly. Whether through some indiscretion at the office of the Prefecture, or through the medium of persons of distinction who went to Biarritz, the people became vaguely informed of the true meaning of the orders issued by the Emperor. They became the subject of general conversation. The Prefect knew this and still did not confirm or deny them. He ordered Jacomet and his agents to issue no more verbal processes, and to discontinue all surveillance. He thought that by following this line of conduct, the decree would die a natural death. But he was deceived from the very outset. The people began to fear some new snare, and continued in general to respect the decree. The position of the Prefect was becoming dangerous, and he was afraid of receiving at any moment a terrible despatch that would hurl him into nonentity. It was now the end of September. M. Fould, Minister of Finance, chanced to pass through Tarbes and Lourdes at the time. Did he increase the Prefect's fears? Was he the recipient of another telegram fraught with more terrific thunder? Nobody knows. One thing is certain, and it is this, that on the 3d of October the Prefect changed his entire programme. Next day, in the name of the Emperor, he gave orders to the Syndic of Lourdes to revoke the decree publicly, and to have Jacomet remove the signposts and the barriers.

M. Lacadè, Syndic of Lourdes, did not hesitate long, and on the 5th of October he had the revocation of the decree of the 8th of June proclaimed by the sound of trumpet and the beating of drums.

This was the first triumph of the work of God at Lourdes—the revocation of the decree prohibiting the people to pray at the Grotto, and drink the water of the fountain.

Do you not clearly discern here, dear reader, the efficacy of the prayers of the righteous? Make then sincerely the following

MEDITATION ON THE EFFICACY OF PRAYER.

I. Consider how *prayer is efficacious, because based on the promises of God*. Lift up your voice to me and I will hear you, says the Lord in the Old Testament (Job xxxiii. 3). Call upon me and I will liberate you, (Psalm xlix, 15), and Jesus Christ repeats in the New Testament: Ask and you shall receive, seek and you shall find, knock and it shall be opened unto you (Matt. vii. 7). Your Father, who is in Heaven, will give good things to them that ask Him (ib. 11). He who asks receives, and he who seeks finds (Luc. xi. 10). And in a thousand other places in the Sacred Scriptures, is the same promise repeated. Can God be wanting in the fulfillment of His promises? Do you believe this from your heart?

II. Consider *the efficacy of prayer proved by fact*. How many have prayed, and have obtained their petitions? * * * Adam obtained the grace of conversion. * * * Abel, of dying in the state of innocence. * * * Abraham, faith, etc.; and in the New Testament all who asked graces of Jesus Christ, had their petitions

immediately answered. The Samaritan received the grace of conversion, * * * the woman who had been suffering from hemorrhage, was cured, * * * the Cananean woman obtained health for her daughter, * * * the Centurion the same blessing for his servant, * * * upon the lepers and the blind man were bestowed the favors for which they prayed. And do we not read in ecclesiastical history, and in the Lives of the Saints, of thousands and millions of graces obtained by prayer? * * * Have not you yourself obtained many blessings through that medium? * * * Why then have you so little confidence in its efficacy?

III. Consider *the conditions necessary to render prayer efficacious*: they are four. 1st, attention; 2d, humility; 3rd, faith, by which we believe the bounty of God, and His fidelity to His promises; 4th, the hope of obtaining the graces prayed for. And you, who complain of not having received the graces you have asked—do you observe these four conditions while pouring forth your prayers? Reflect, and see if the words of the Apostle St. James, are not applicable to you: “You ask, and receive not; because you ask amiss.” James, iv. 3.

Examine yourself on the manner in which you pray, and resolve immediately to remedy its defects.

Practice—Recite your morning and evening prayers to-day with the four conditions aforesaid.

Ejaculation.—*Domine, doce nos orare.* Luc. xxi. 1. O my God, and Immaculate Virgin of Lourdes, teach us to pray.

CHAPTER II.

A Grand Fiasco.

“I have seen the wicked highly exalted, and lifted up like the cedars of Libanus. And I passed by, and lo he was not: and I sought him, and his place was not found.” Psalm xxxvi. 35.

Although the divine rewards and punishments are not ordinarily meted out in due proportion to merits and demerits, as is the case in the next life; nevertheless, it often happens that people get a foretaste of them even in this. On the other hand, the triumph of the work of God would not have been completed at Lourdes by the bare revocation of the famous decree of the 8th of June. Something more was needed, and God brought it about.

On the morning of the 5th of October, the revocation of the decree was published, and in the afternoon, Jacomet, the famous Commissary of Police, went with his guards to the Grotto to remove the signboards and barriers. The crowd had already assembled, and was every moment visibly increasing. Some were praying on bended knees, and made every effort not to be distracted by the noise outside, while pouring forth their thanks to God for having put an end to the scandal and the persecutions. Others stood discoursing in a low tone—awaiting, not without emotion, what was about to take place. Women in great numbers were telling their beads. Many, having brought bottles or other vessels with them, wished to fill them on the very spot whence the fountain had sprung. They threw flowers over the barriers into the Grotto: but the barriers themselves no body touched. It was the duty of those parties who had publicly put them up in opposi-

tion to the power of God, to come now to take them down in public, in meek subjection to the will of a man.

Jacomet arrived. Although, in spite of himself, people detected in his *personnel* a certain embarrassment produced by anger, and read, in the pallor of his face, deep internal humiliation ; still, contrary to general expectation, he had not the ghastly aspect of a conquered man. Escorted by his agents, who were furnished with axes and spades, he advanced with head erect, and with singular affectation, clothed as he was in gala costume, with his bandoleer girded around his waist, and flapping against his parade sword, passed through the people, and took up his position in front of the barrier. An undefined commotion of feeling, accompanied by indistinct murmurings and an occasional groan, had commenced to actuate the multitude. Jacomet ascended a piece of rock, and endeavored to excuse himself to the people for what he had done, imprudently hinting, too, that it was the Prefect and himself who had caused the decree to be revoked, etc. The people suffered him to speak, and preserved the coolest silence. Some little boy muttered and laughed. Jacomet was visibly enraged at his failure. He gave orders to tear down the barriers, and it was promptly done.

The City of Lourdes was filled with emotion. On that afternoon the people went to, and returned from the Grotto by the direct path. In front of the rock, the faithful beyond number, were on their knees. Hymns were sung, and litanies recited in honor of the Most Holy Virgin ; while each one drank of the water of the fountain. The faithful were now free. God had conquered.

But it was not yet the end. In consequence of what

had happened, Prefect Massy could not remain in the town; and, in fact, the Emperor did not hesitate to send him to the first vacant prefecture. It was singularly remarkable that the first vacancy was at Isère, the capital of Grenoble. Does the reader remember what Prefect Massy had said at the commencement of the apparitions of Lourdes? "Had I been Prefect of Isère at the time of the pretended apparitions of Salette, I would have taken immediate action with regard to them, and the legend would have been settled as the one of Lourdes shall soon be. All this phantasmagoria shall fall into nothing."

Pcor, simple man! The events of Lourdes triumphed and Prefect Oscar Pardoux Massy fell, before the end of the year, and was within a hair's breadth of becoming a nonentity. * * * And Divine Providence only took him away from the Madonna of Lourdes to send him to the Madonna of Salette. Such a course is a verification of what the Scripture says of the Divine Wisdom: *Ludens in orbe terrarum*—playing throughout the universe. Is this chance?

The Most Holy Madonna wished to open the eyes of poor, proud Prefect Massy. She wished to turn to good all the evil he had done. She wishes now to take his soul to paradise, if it be not yet there, for he is dead.

Something similar happened to M. Domenick Jacomet, Commissary of Police. He was appointed to the same office in another department; and we must say, as we have already observed, that in this, his proper sphere of action, he aided, by his rare sagacity, in detecting many malefactors—a trait in his official character, which was paramount in procuring for him a good promotion to the Central Commissariate of one of the

principal cities of France, where he continues to discharge the duties of his office with ability and tact. M. Vitale Dutour, Imperial Procurator, was also called to other functions, and gradually received preferment.

What a withering blow it was for those who had shouted victory, and believed their cause triumphant, to see themselves overcome by the work of God, now victorious at Lourdes.

Enter into yourself, and make the following

MEDITATION ON THE VANITY OF EARTHLY THINGS.

I. Consider *the vanity of riches*. Many seek them passionately, ardently, and with a mind disturbed by impatience and solicitude, and still can never find them.

* * * How they are undeceived at the hour of death! Many others acquire wealth, and by a reverse of fortune lose it. * * * How painful! Many more seek riches, find, and possess them; but death removes them with a single blow. * * *

What an outrage! Do you belong to any one of these three classes?

II. Consider *the vanity of honors*. What madness is shown in striving to obtain some step in society, some post, some honorable position, which often is never reached! * * * What folly! Others gain the end in view after a long struggle, and by a calumny, or a change of superiors, or by some disgrace, lose it. * * *

How their fanciful creations vanish! Others, just in possession of the object for which their hearts have so much yearned, are then called upon by death, and forced to bid it farewell. * * *

What anguish! What solicitude do people feel in order to make a good appearance at a ball, to render themselves pleasing to certain persons, to cut a figure. * * * To-day they

are troubled about worldly trifles;—to-morrow they are in the grave.

III. Consider *the vanity of pleasures*. How fleeting they are! How short! How fanciful! Look at Solomon, who wished to enjoy every pleasure. * * * He afterwards said: "I have seen, enjoyed, and have had experience of everything under the sun, and, lo! all is vanity and affliction of spirit, except to love God, and serve Him alone." * * * Have not you yourself a thousand times experienced the unmasked worthlessness of a pleasure you had enjoyed, and the pain and remorse which followed it? What blindness not to perceive even yet the vanity of all worldly aspirations!

Practice.—Give a private alms to some poor person in order to obtain from God a knowledge of the vanity of earthly things.

Ejaculation.—O Jesus, O Mary Immaculate, I wish to love you with my whole heart.

CHAPTER III.

The Investigating Commission.

"He that doth truth, cometh to the light."—John iii. 21.

The work of God at Lourdes had triumphed over the assaults and threats of the Prefect of Police, the Syndic, and the Justice of the Peace. These distinguished personages having been now removed, the communal district, so to speak, was disincumbered of the harrassings whereby the Commission could possibly have been impeded in its sessions. The Grotto was now open. The witnesses could give their testimony without

fear, and the sick could be brought to the fountain to make free use of its waters. It was now time to examine facts.

The Church, in such circumstances as these, asks nothing but liberty to ascertain the truth; and, in fact, she went to work immediately.

By virtue of his pastoral of the 28th of July, the Mons. Bishop of Tarbes had constituted the investigating Commission; but it must not be supposed that by this act he had given his episcopal decision. He had done nothing of the kind. Having seen during the months of August, September and October that the minds of the people were yet too much excited, the Bishop suspended the faculties extended to the Commission; and although his Pastoral had enjoined upon it the duty of commencing its labors *immediately*, he did not allow it to enter in session until the 17th of November. Before speaking of the labors of the Commission, let us examine the wisdom of the Pastoral that had created it, and the profound philosophy of the Church in searching after truth. We will, therefore, reproduce here the principal parts of the Pastoral aforesaid:

“ART. I.—In our diocese of Tarbes we have have instituted a Commission to discover: 1st. If by means of the water of Lourdes, whether drank or used as a lotion, certain cures have been effected, and if these cures can be explained naturally, or ought to be attributed to a truly supernatural cause; 2d. If the visions, which Bernadette says she has seen in the Grotto, be real, and in such case if they can be explained naturally, or if they bear a divine and supernatural character; 3d. If the Apparition have made known demands and manifested

intentions to the little girl, and if she have been charged to make known said demands and intentions—and to whom, and what is their tendency; 4th. If the fountain now flowing in the Grotto existed previous to the visions which Bernadette says she has seen.

“ART. II.—The Commission shall present to us such facts only as are based upon solid proofs, and send us substantiated reports accompanied with its own views of the case.

“ART. III.—The Very Rev. Vicars of the diocese shall be the principal correspondents of the Commission, and they are requested to duly note: 1st. The facts that have taken place in their respective vicarages; 2d. The persons who shall be able to give testimony regarding them; 3d. Those who by their science are capable of throwing light on the deliberations of the Commission; 4th. The physicians who had attended the sick previous to their cure.

“ART. IV.—The testimony shall be given upon oath.

“ART. V.—We earnestly recommend the Commission frequently to call into its midst men well versed in the sciences of medicine, physics, chemistry, geology, etc., and hear them discuss the difficulties that may arise during debate upon certain views, and become acquainted with their ideas concerning them. The Commission must leave nothing undone, in order to become enlightened, and to reach the truth, whatever it may be.

“ART. VI.—The Commission shall be composed of nine members of the Capitol of our Cathedral, of the Superiors of our Seminaries (grand and small), the Superior of the Missionaries of the Diocese, the Curé

of Lourdes, and the professors of dogma, morals and physics in our Seminary. The professor of chemistry in our small Seminary shall often be attentively heard.

“ART. VII.—The Commission shall enter upon its labors immediately.”

Who will not now admire the wisdom of these regulations? The question to be decided belongs on one side to Religion; and, lo! the priests, the canons, the pastors, the professors of theology—men all well read in sacred lore, are engaged to examine it. It bears, too, on the other side, upon the positive sciences and the medical art; and, lo! we see men deeply read in these branches called in to aid in its development. What disinterestedness, what methodical indifference in the solution of the problem: the very best state of mind, according to Cartesius and all sound philosophers, when we are in search of truth. A man of such sentiments seeks the truth, and the truth only, *whatever it may be*. And such a one was the Bishop. Are the apparitions true? Then, he will admit them? Are they false? Then, he will condemn them. Moreover, he waits four months from the time of the last apparition, before permitting the Commission to enter upon its labors, fearing that the excited state of public feeling and the other difficulties might tend to a prejudging of the truth.

Is it not true, my reader, that the Church, when having to treat of facts that may be supernatural, walks, while studying them, with leaden steps—that is to say, with the greatest slowness, as if she had got feet formed of that heavy metal? Enter into yourself, and make the following

MEDITATION ON THE MEANS OF ACQUIRING FAITH.

I. Consider that *the first means of acquiring the faith is prayer*. Prayer is the first condition of all God's gifts, and, consequently, of faith, too, which is the most precious and fundamental deposit in the treasury of God. Have you asked of God the grace of faith? Have you asked it with the necessary conditions—especially with a lively confidence and with a profound and sincere desire of obtaining it, in order to live a good, Christian life? Have you prayed with humility?

II. Consider *the second means, which is the study of our religion*. Although faith is a gift of God, and a virtue infused by Him into our souls, still we can, after having had recourse to prayer, dispose ourselves to receive it, by a sincere study of our religion, entered into principally through a love of truth. So many learned individuals, especially the English, who in our own day, through a study of the true religion entered into with this disposition, abandon their sects and become Catholics, are a proof of what I say. Have you acted thus? Or if your talents and your opportunities are not sufficient for the task, have you at least endeavored to become instructed in your belief by holding converse with some learned priest, or with some well read layman?

III. Consider *the third means, which is the desire to be sincerely converted*, and to abandon your evil passions and your sins. The cause that keeps so many skeptics far away from the faith is passion, and an undue attachment to riches, honors, and the pleasures of the world. They have not got the faith because they do not wish to possess it, and they do not desire it because the pos-

session of it would be too troublesome, and too great an inconvenience to their perverse hearts. They are precisely parallel with those of whom our Lord speaks in the Gospel: Men loved darkness rather than the light, for their works were evil (John iii., 19). Are you one of this class? If you be, how shall you excuse yourself before the tribunal of God? Place your hand upon your breast * * * and make a resolution.

Practice.—Examine the doubts you may entertain on matters of faith, and lay them before some one competent to solve them for you.

Ejaculation.—*Domine, ut videam.* O my Lord, and Immaculate Virgin Mary, grant me the light of faith.

CHAPTER IV.

The Labors of the Episcopal Commission.

“Now this is eternal life: That they may know Thee, the only true God.” John xvii., 3.

Having admired the wonderful prudence with which the Bishop drew up his instructions for the guidance of the Commission in its investigations of the work of God, let us, before hearing the sentence, assist, so to speak, at the discussion of the case. Let us follow up the Commission and study as we go along.

On the 17th of November the Episcopal Commission went to Lourdes, and first of all examined the little girl upon the visions.

“Bernadette,” says the verbal process of the Secretary, “appeared before us with great modesty, and still

with a remarkable air of self-reliance. She was calm and unimbarassed in the midst of this large assembly, and in the presence of respectable ecclesiastics whom she had never seen, but of whose mission she had been apprised."

"She," writes M. Lasserre, "related the history of the apparitions, exposing with the grave certainty of a witness, who was sure of the truth of what she stated, and with the humble candor of a child, all she had witnessed in this supernatural drama. She answered every question, and left no obscurity in the minds of her interrogators.

"The Commissioners, during their sessions, visited the rocks of Massabielle. They saw with their own eyes the immense jet of the divine fountain: it was established as a fact by the unanimous declarations of the inhabitants that the fountain had not existed previous to the time it gushed forth by a miracle before the eyes of the multitude, from beneath the hand of the seer while in ecstasy. At Lourdes and all around they made a strict inquiry concerning the extraordinary cures worked by the waters of the Grotto. In these studies, so delicate in their nature, there were two very distinct parts: the facts in themselves and their circumstances confirmed by human testimony. The examination of the natural or supernatural character of the facts was prosecuted, at least in great measure, on medical grounds: and by this two-fold method of inquiry was the Tribunal guided in its deliberations.

"While journeying through the dioceses of Tarbes, Auch, and Bayonne, the Commissioners cited before them all those who had become publicly known as the recipients of these singular cures; and questioned them

minutely on all the particulars of their diseases, and on their instantaneous or gradual recuperation. They caused men well read in the sciences to put them technical questions of which, perhaps, the theologians would have never thought. And in order to establish the truth of their assertions, they called in the parents, friends, neighbors, all the witnesses of the various phases of the event—those who had seen the invalids, and those who had witnessed their cure, &c., &c.

“On each witness they imposed two conditions : first, not to testify to anything except what he had seen and known personally ; secondly, they obliged him by virtue of his solemn oath, to tell the whole truth, and nothing but the truth.

“Whoever wished to contest this miracle, or that, not upon vague general theories, but by precise reasoning and upon a personal knowledge of the facts, was publicly invited to present himself without delay before the Commission, who would hear with as much willingness the parties who believed, as those who did not believe in the events related. Wherefore, whoever did not present himself was condemned by the very fact, as he thereby admitted he had nothing particular and formal to oppose. The very fact of absenting oneself bore this evident sense and high import. It is not certain that when persons are overheated by the ardor of long debate, they would subject themselves to an ignominious overthrow by retiring from the contest. To refuse the lists, is to acknowledge defeat.

“Having thus arrived at absolute certainty regarding the substance and accidental qualities of the facts, the Commissioners submitted their views of the case to the eminent and authorized physicians associated with them

in examining it. These physicians were Doctor Vergez, physician of the waters of Barèges, associate professor of the Faculty of Montpellier, and Doctor Dozous, who had already studied on his own account many of the extraordinary facts. Each physician gave in a separate report, his estimate of the nature of the cures—at one time throwing miracles aside by attributing the cessation of disease to a natural cause ; at another, declaring the fact perfectly inexplicable except by the supernatural work of Divine agency, and again coming to no conclusion, but leaving their judgment suspended between the miraculous and the natural.

“ Upon this two-fold element—the full knowledge of the facts on one side, and the deductions of science on the other—the Commissioners prosecuted their deliberations, and laid their decision before the Bishop, together with the documents touching the process.

“ With such precautions it could happen that true miracles incompletely established, might fail to receive the sanction of the Examining Commission, but it is at least absolutely certain that no illusion could resist the severity of its scrutiny, and take a stand in its thoughts, amongst the wonderful facts of the supernatural and divine order.

“ Having been for many months in session the Episcopal Commissioners had been therefore overcrowded with testimonies regarding these astounding cures, the true character of which it was their duty to determine. There was a great number of miracles ; but as they were counted by hundreds, it was impossible to study them all. They therefore subjected thirty to a severe test and examination ; and having studied them thoroughly, referred them to the Bishop in three categories.

“ The first category comprised cures, which though surprising, were still susceptible of a natural explanation—and they were six. The second was composed of cures, which the Commission was inclined to look upon as supernatural ; but which in consequence of being liable to admit of a natural explanation, although altogether unlike one of that class, it did not acknowledge to belong to that order—and these were eight. The third embraced those cures which evidently and undeniably bore the impress of a supernatural character—and they were sixteen.”

My dear reader, what do you say of this arrangement? Does the action of the Commission appear to you to be prudent? Have you any objection to make against this method of examination, or the members that composed the committee, or against the Bishop of Tarbes who had nominated them?

The “ *Amsterdam Courier*” of the 9th of September, 1858, sought to discredit, or at least diminish the importance of the Episcopal Commission, because it was *entirely composed of ecclesiastics and of persons salaried by the clergy.*

But tell me if you please, gentlemen proprietors of the *Amsterdam Courier*, should the Commission have been composed of architects, civil engineers, army officials, Turks or Jews? Have you forgot that the facts to be judged of belong to religion and theology? And who, ordinarily speaking, are versed in religion and theology, if not the ecclesiastics who devote so many years to the study of both? If then the ecclesiastics are the true experts in religion and theology, ought they not form the larger portion of the Commission? Is not such a course pursued in every other case? If you want to

know whether a house is properly built or not, do you not call upon a commission of architects and builders? If to judge of the goodness of a watch, is it not to a watchmaker you apply? And so with regard to every thing else.

Ecclesiastics? Do you mean to say that they are more credulous than others? For goodness sake, assert it not with regard to the facts of Lourdes, for this whole book in the most solemn manner stamps such an assertion as a falsehood. Read again the ninth, tenth and eleventh chapters of the second part of this history, and you will see how slow and rigorous the ecclesiastics are in admitting wonderful occurrences into the category of the supernatural and divine.

Persons salaried by the clergy? Let us distinguish : *Before the appointing of the Commission* the Professors of the Seminary were certainly under salary, but not Doctor Vergès, physician of the waters of Barèges, nor Doctor Dozous, superintending physician (medico condotto) of Lourdes. *After the appointing of the Commission?* We are not aware that these gentlemen had been feed for going through these labors. But let us suppose they had, what have you to sneer at? Would you yourselves work for nothing? Was it not just that from the very moment that the emoluments accruing from the exercise of their noble profession had ceased, the consulting physicians should be compensated for their losses? To speak candidly, I fear you are measuring others by your own standard, calumniating persons of unblemished honor, and representing them in the light of the soldiers who guarded the sepulchre of our Lord Jesus Christ, and for money bound them-

selves to testify that the Disciples had stolen Him away while they were asleep.

In fine, dear reader, the good faith of the *Amsterdam Courier*, appears from the bare-faced lies it published in its issue above mentioned;—wherefore, we shall not reason more concerning it, but will propose to you the following

MEDITATION ON THE STUDY OF RELIGION.

I. Consider how *the study of religion is obligatory*,—that is to say, it is not a matter of free choice for any one, but is imposed upon all as a truly rigorous duty. In fact, our Lord Jesus Christ has said in the Holy Gospel: “This is eternal life: That they may know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, Whom Thou hast sent” (John xvii. 3). Now in order to know, it is necessary to examine, study and occupy the intellect with religion, which is precisely the comprehension of the truths revealed by God, by means of which we can know Him. Do you think of this as your duty? Are you not one of those who, engaged altogether by the things of earth, never think on God and His Religion?

II. Consider *how useful this study is*, because it leads you to a knowledge of God, and of His infinite perfections, and therefore aids you in becoming perfect yourself: moreover, because it puts you on the right path to Paradise for which you have been created, and which you shall never enter without having known and practiced the true religion; and finally, because religion being the principal truth which comprehends all the rest, is the only one capable of satisfying the cravings

you feel of knowing the truth. Are you not then devoid of reason in neglecting a study that enriches you with so many blessings,—while on the other hand, you, perhaps, cultivate studies that either do you no good, or work much evil in your regard?

III. Consider *the manner of prosecuting this study*. Are you instructed and well read? Well then, you can make this study by the aid of the beautiful books we have got treating on Religion, Catholic Theology, Christian Doctrine: and all this will be very useful to you. If, on the other hand, you are illiterate, or have not time and talent to enter upon this study by yourself alone, you can do it by going to hear the Lenten sermons, and the instructions of the month of Mary, but principally by listening attentively to your Pastor's exhortations. Nay, more; this you ought to do, even if you be learned, because faith is acquired by hearing, as St. Paul says: "Faith then cometh by hearing."—Rom. x. 17). Reflect that the Apostle converted the world, and taught the true religion, not only by aid of books, but also by preaching. * * * What importance do you attach to this? Reflect seriously on this meditation, and profit by it.

Practice.—Hear a sermon with attention, and when you return home repeat it over in your own mind, praying God to aid you in deriving profit from it.

Ejaculation.—*Panem nostrum quotidianum da nobis hodie*. O Lord, give us this day the daily bread of your holy word.

CHAPTER V.

A Sketch of the Miracles of Lourdes.

“Surely he hath borne our infirmities.—Isaih liiii., 4.

For the sake of the triumph of the work of God at Lourdes, and the edification of our readers, we cannot omit relating at least some of the cures acknowledged by the Examining Commission to be miraculous. We will commence with two persons who, although perfect strangers to each other, were still bound together by a mysterious union.

In the first half of the month of October, in the year 1858, there was in the City of Nay (Bassi Pirenei), an old widow named Magdalene Rizan, who was on the point of death. For a period of about twenty-five years, her life had been a series of uninterrupted sufferings. Having been visited by cholera in the year 1832, her left side became almost completely paralyzed. She limped with the greatest difficulty around the house by supporting herself against the walls, or leaning on some article of furniture. Rarely, two or three times a year, in mid-summer, was she able, although aided by an attendant—in fact, literally carried in the arms, to go hear Mass in the Church of Nay, though it was quite convenient to her house. It was impossible for her to kneel or rise without another's help. One of her hands was completely decayed. Her whole nervous system, no less than her limbs, was suffering from this terrible stroke. She was harrassed by continual hemorrhages. Her stomach could not bear substantial food. Soups made of meat and beans, and a little coffee, were the only aliment which, prostrate as she

was in this deplorable condition, kept alive within her, the flickering flame of life—a flame that might be extinguished at any moment, and was incapable of warming its poor tenement of clay so often agitated by icy tremblings. The poor woman was always cold. In the very midst of the glowing heat of July and August, she always wished to see the fire crackling on the hearth, and to have her old arm-chair placed beside it.

For sixteen or eighteen months her deplorable condition had grown even worse. The paralysis of her left side had, meantime, become complete, and commenced to extend its evil influence into her right leg. The decayed members had become swollen beyond measure, as is often the case with dropsical patients.

Madam Rizan was removed from her chair, and put in bed. She was so weak from utter prostration that she could not make the slightest movement of herself; and it was necessary, from time to time, to turn her around in order to give her that relief which a change of position affords. She was now only an inert heap of flesh. Sensibility, as well as the power to move, had left her. * * * * “Where are my limbs?” she often asked when she needed to be turned round a little. Her limbs were, so to say, contracted and doubled over her person, and she continually lay upon her side in the form of the letter Z.

Two physicians had attended her in succession. Dr. Talamon had, for a long time, looked upon her as incurable; and if he continued to visit her frequently, it was through pure friendship. He refused to prescribe any remedies, stating that medical treatment would be injurious to her, and that medicine of any kind would only weaken her, and wear out still more her system,

which was already so fearfully disarranged. Doctor Subervielle, at the pressing solicitations of Madam Rizan, prescribed some remedies, which were soon known to be useless ; and he, too, lost all hope.

If her paralyzed members had become insensible, the pains the unhappy creature suffered at one time in her stomach, at another in her bowels and in her head, were agonizing. The uniform position in which her poor body was forced to remain, had ended in producing a two-fold pain—one in the cavity of the breast, and the other in the groin. The skin on her side was peeled off by the long friction of the bed, and her flesh could be seen completely bare and blood-stained. Death was drawing nigh.

Madama Rizan had two children. Her daughter, whose name was Lubina, lived with her, and tended her with the greatest diligence and affection. Her son, Romanus, was employed in a commercial house in Bordeaux. When the last hope of her recovery had fled, and Doctor Subervielle had declared that she had scarcely a few days to live, he ordered Romanus to be sent for in all haste. On his arrival, Romanus embraced his mother, and received her blessing and last adieu. He was soon obliged to return in pursuance of an order that called him back. Torn thus from the side of the bed of death by the cruel tyranny of business, he left his mother with the harrowing certainty of never seeing her again.

The dying woman had received Extreme Unction, and her agony was prolonged amid the most intolerable sufferings. * * * “My God !” she often exclaimed, “put an end to these terrible pains. Grant me, O Lord, the boon of recovery, or death !” She got the Sisters of the

Cross at Jgon, of whose convent her sister-in-law was Superioress, to make a novena for her to the Most Holy Virgin to obtain through her power either her recovery or death. The sick woman manifested a desire to drink of the water of the Grotto. Madam Nessans, a neighbor, who was going to Lourdes, promised to bring her some on her return.

From that time she was watched day and night. On Saturday, the 16th of October, a violent crisis announced the definite approach of the last moment. Her expectorations of blood were almost continuous. A livid tint had diffused itself all over her withered countenance. Her eyes had become glassy; and she spoke not except to lament her acute sufferings. * * * "Lord," she often reated, "O Lord, how I do suffer! Can I not die?" "Her wish shall soon be gratified, said Doctor Subervielle, taking his leave. "She will die this night, or at furthest, at break of day. She has got no more oil in her lamp."

The door was opened from time to time. Friends, neighbors, priests, the Abbè Dupont, Abbè Sanarans, Vicar of Nay, entered silently, and inquired in a low tone if the sick woman were still alive. In the evening when leaving her, Abbe Andre Dupont, her spiritual adviser and friend, could not refrain from tears. * * * "Before day dawns," he said, "she will be dead, and I shall not see her again except in paradise."

Night came on; and the house was gradually becoming lonely. On her knees before a statue of the Virgin, Lubina prayed without any earthly hope. The silence was profound, and was interrupted only by the labored breathing of the dying woman. It was now near midnight.

"My daughter," said the woman in agony.

Lubina rose from her knees, and approached the bed. * * * “What do you wish, my mother,” said she taking her by the hand.

“My dear daughter,” she said in a voice somewhat unusual—and she seemed to be just wakening from a profound sleep, “go to our friend, Madam Nessans, who should have returned this evening from Lourdes, and ask her for a glass of the water of the Grotto. It is that water that must cure me. The Holy Virgin wishes it.”

“But good mother,” replied Lubina, “it is now too late. I cannot leave you alone, and every one is in bed in Madam Nessian’s house. But I will go for it very early in the morning.”

“Well then, let us wait.” And the sick woman fell into her wonted silence.

The night passed away, and it was long. The glad sounds of the bells finally announced the dawn of the Lord’s day. Soon the *Angelus* bell invited the people to join in this matin devotion; and the orisons of the faithful were wafted on the breeze unto Mary’s throne, as they celebrated the eternal memory of her omnipotent maternity. Lubina hastened to Madam Nessian’s, and soon returned with a bottle of the water of the Grotto. * * * * “Take this, my mother, and drink! May the Most Holy Virgin come to your relief!”

Madam Rizan put the glass to her lips and drank a few mouthfuls. * * * “O my daughter! my daughter!” she exclaimed, “I am drinking in life. In this water there is life. Rub my face with it! Rub my arms with it! Rub my whole body with it!”

Lubina trembling, and transported out of herself, steeped a linen cloth in the miraculous water, and

bathed her mother's face. * * * "I feel myself cured!" exclaimed the mother in a voice that had become clear and strong. "I feel myself cured!"

Lubina still continued to rub gently the paralyzed and swollen members of the patient with the damp cloth. Transported with felicity accompanied with I know not what sort of a terrified scream, she saw the enormous swelling diminish and disappear instantly beneath the rapid motion of her hand, and the skin, violently distended and clear, assume its natural appearance. Suddenly, completely, without the transiency of ordinary recovery, health and life returned beneath the touch of her fingers.

"It seems to me," said the mother, "that something like darts of fire, is shooting out from all parts of my body." * * * It was, no doubt, the hidden principle of the disease that was escaping from that body, until now so racked with pain, and which it was quitting forever in submission to the action of a superhuman will. All this was accomplished in an instant. In one or two minutes the agonizing body of Madam Rizan having been rubbed by her daughter, had recovered the fullness of its powers. "I am cured! completely cured!" exclaimed the happy woman. "How good the Most Holy Virgin is! How powerful!"

After this bound of her soul heavenward, her appetite made its calls violently felt.

"Lubina, my dear Lubina, I am hungry; I wish to eat."

"Do you wish some coffee? Do you wish some wine, or milk?" stammered the young woman, dismayed by the somewhat thunder-like instantaneousness of this miracle.

“I wish some meat and bread, daughter; I haven’t eaten any for four-and-twenty years.”

There was in the house a piece of cold meat, and a little wine; and Madam Rizan partook of both.

“And now,” said she, “I wish to get up.”

“It is not possible, mother,” said Lubina, hesitating in spite of herself to believe her own eyes, and imagining, perchance, that cures sprung directly from God, were subject, like ordinary cases, to the slowness and the precautions of convalescence. She trembled to see this miracle, so un hoped for, vanish of a sudden. The mother insisted, and asked for her clothes. Many months before had they been folded up, and placed in a press in a room near by. It was believed, alas! that they would not be needed any more. Lubina left her mother’s room to look for them. She returned almost instantly; but having reached the threshold of the door, she screamed, and let the clothes fall from her hands, so great was her consternation. During this short absence, her mother had jumped out of bed, and had gone to kneel before the little chimney-piece, on which was placed a statue of the Virgin Mary. There she was with her hands joined, offering up her orisons of thanks to her powerful liberator.

Lubina, terrified as if in the presence of a resurrection from the grave, was not able to assist her mother to dress. Madam Rizan picked up her clothes herself, put them on in an instant, and prostrated herself again before the sacred image. It was now about seven o’clock in the morning. The people were coming from first Mass. The screams of Lubina were heard by them as they passed by. * * * “Poor child!” they said, “her mother has by this time breathed her last, for it

was impossible she could have passed the night." Friends and neighbors entered the house to comfort Lubina in her unutterable grief: and amongst them were two Sisters of the Holy Cross.

"Well, my poor child, so your good mother is dead! but you will again see her in heaven." And they approached the girl as she stood at the half-open door completely confounded and bewildered. She was scarcely able to make the Sisters this reply: "My mother is resuscitated"—words uttered in a voice choked by emotion so strong that she swooned away.

"She is raving," thought the Sisters, entering the room, and followed by some persons who had ascended the stairs after them.

Lubina had told the truth. Madam Rizan had got out of bed, put on her clothes, and was praying prostrate before the image of Mary. She stood up, and said, "I am cured! Let us thank the Most Holy Virgin. Let us all fall on our knees!"

The report of this extraordinary occurrence spread through the city of Nay with the rapidity of lightning. During that day and the next, the house was full of people. With deep emotion and recollection did the crowds throng that room upon which a ray of the omnipotent bounty of God had shed its influence. Every one wanted to see Madam Rizan, to touch her body raised to life, to be convinced by his own eyes, and to impress upon his memory all the particulars of this supernatural drama.

Doctor Subervielle unhesitatingly acknowledged the supernatural and divine character of this extraordinary cure. Meanwhile at Bordeaux, Romanus Rizan was awaiting in the anguish of despair, the fatal letter that was

to announce to him his mother's death. It was a terrible stroke for him one morning to receive a letter, the superscription of which was in the handwriting of the Abbè Dupont. * * * "I have lost my poor mother," he said, to a friend who had come to visit him. And he burst into tears, without having courage to open the envelope.

"Have courage in your misfortunes, have faith," said his friend.

At last he broke the seal. The first words that met his eyes were these: "*Deo gratias! Allelujah!* Rejoice, my dear friend, your mother is cured—completely cured. It is the Most Holy Virgin who has miraculously restored her to health." The Abbè Dupont related to him how in a manner altogether divine, Madam Rizan had found at the termination of her agony, life instead of death.

O what joy for the son! What joy for his friend! This gentleman was employed in a printing house in Bordeaux, in which the *Messenger Catholique* was published.—"Give me this letter," said he to Romanus Rizan; "it is necessary that the works of God be known, and that the Madonna of Lourdes be glorified." In part freely, and in part by force he got the letter. In a few days it was duly published in the *Messenger Catholique*. The fortunate son set out as soon as possible for Nay. A woman was awaiting his arrival by the diligence. Brisk and lively she ran towards him as he descended from the vehicle, and flung herself into his arms weeping tears of tenderness and joy. It was his mother!

Ten years afterwards, M. Henry Lasserre paid a visit to Madam Rizan, and was struck with astonishment at her perfect health and green old age. She had reached

the age of seventy-one years, without betraying any of the infirmities which so many winters carry in their train. There was no trace of all the pains and sufferings she had endured. All who had previously known her, were astonished at so prodigious a change.

But let us relate the other cure which, we have said, is knit to this by a mysterious union. We will translate literally from M. Lasserre's beautiful history.

“Long before the events of Lourdes, and before Bernadette was born—it was in the month of April, 1843, a respectable family of Tartas (Landes) was about to be visited by a very dire calamity. Madame Adele de Chauton had been about twelve months married to M. Moreau di Sazenay, and the term of her confinement was drawing nigh. A first maternity is always very critical. The doctors, called upon in all haste, declared on the strength of the premonitory symptoms of the case, that her parturition would be very laborious, and did not conceal the possibility of a dangerous result.

“No one is ignorant of the harrowing anxieties of cases like this. * * * What shall be the issue of the crisis? Shall joy be the result, or heartrending bereavement? What is to be got ready?—a cradle, or a bier? And,—oh! terrible contrast! shall it be necessary to procure both at the same moment? Must not, perchance, two coffins be provided—one for the mother, the other for the babe? Human silence is now silent, and dares not pronounce a judgment. These moments of anguish are terrible indeed,—but still more so must they be for those who seek not strength and consolation in God.

“But M. Moreau was a Christian. He knew that the thread of our existence is in the hands of the Supreme

Master, unto whom one can always appeal from the decision of physicians. When man has pronounced his condemnation the King of Heaven, like earthly monarchs, has still reserved to Himself the right of grace.

“ ‘The Most Holy Virgin,’ thought the unhappy husband, ‘will perhaps deign to hear my prayer.’—Accordingly he recurred with confidence to the Mother of the Saviour. And lo! the danger that had at first appeared so threatening, little by little began to pass away, even as a dark cloud is rent and dissipated by the winds in the heights of space. The horrizon becomes clear and bright, and is soon ablaze with effulgence: a child is given to the world.

“ Certainly this happy release had nothing extraordinary in it. The trouble, however alarming it might have appeared to M. Moreau, had never been absolutely dispaired of by the physicians as being beyond the sphere of medical skill. Therefore, the happy issue of this critical case could possibly be attributed to a natural cause. But the heart of the husband and father, far from entertaining such an idea, was penetrated with grateful acknowledgments of the benign power of the Most Holy Virgin. He was not one of those ingrates who, in order to be released from their debt of gratitude, seek only the chance of being able to doubt of the benefits they have received.

“ ‘What name will you give your daughter?’ M. Moreau was asked.

“ ‘She shall be called Mary,’ he replied.

“ ‘Mary? That is the most common name we have got. All the plain women and the servant-maids are called Mary. And then Mary Moreau does not sound nice; there is no euphony in it. These two M’s and two R’s

are insupportable.' A thousand reasons of like import were adduced. M. Moreau was of a tractable disposition, easily pleased, and habitually disposed to yield to the remarks made to him by others; but in this case he took a firm stand against entreaties and advice: to displease in the present circumstances gave him no trouble, and his tenacity of purpose was extraordinary. He remembered that in the recent difficulties he had invoked this sacred name, which is the name of the Queen of Heaven. * * * 'She shall be called Mary,' he said. 'I wish her to have the Most Holy Virgin for patron. I tell you in truth this name will bring her good luck.'

"All around him were astonished at his obstinacy; but it yielded not in the least, no more than did the firm purpose of Zacchary who, as the Gospel tells us, wished his son to be called John. * * * The father wished, beside, that for three years his daughter should be clothed in white, which is the Virgin's color; and it was done.

"More than sixteen years had passed away since this event took place. A second child was born and was called Martha. Mademoiselle Marie Moreau was pursuing her studies under the Sisters of the Sacred Heart at Bordeaux. About the commencement of the month of January, 1858, she was attacked with sore eyes, and was soon forced to give up work of every description.

"She thought the affliction might be only the effect of cold, and that it would pass away as it had come; but her hopes were delusive, and soon her condition assumed a character perfectly alarming. The ordinary physician of the house judged it necessary to consult

M. Bermont, a distinguished oculist of Bordeaux. Far from being the effect of a cold, the disease was pronounced to be amaurosis. 'The disease is most serious,' said M. Bermont. 'One of the eyes is completely lost, and the other is very badly afflicted.'

"The parents were immediately notified. The mother hastened to Bordeaux to take home her daughter, in order to have her follow out with the greatest care the treatment prescribed by the oculist—if not to cure the eye that was lost, at least to save the one that yet remained, and which was so much impaired as not to be able to discern objects except through a most confused misty coating.

"Medicine, sea-bathing, all that science recommends, had proved useless. Spring and Autumn had passed away in those vain efforts. The sad affliction had resisted every remedy, and was gradually becoming more serious. Complete blindness was imminent. The parents determined to bring their daughter to Paris in order to consult the medical celebrities. While preparing in all haste for the journey, overshadowed at the same time by the doubt that it was already too late to check the affliction with which their child was threatened, the letter-carrier brought them the weekly number of the *Messenger Catholique*, a little journal published at Bordeaux, and to which they were subscribers. It was now the beginning of November, and the number of the *Messenger Catholique* that now reached them was precisely the one that contained the Abbè Dupont's letter relating the miraculous cure of the widow Rizan of Nay, effected by the use of the water of the Grotto.

M. Moreau mechanically opened the paper, and his eye fell upon this divine narration. While reading it he

grew pale. Hope was awakened in the soul of the disconsolate father, and a ray of light had shot its benign influence into his heart.

“‘Behold,’ said he, ‘the door at which we have to knock. It is evident,’ he, added with wonderful simplicity—and the precise words it is our purpose to record—‘it is evident that the Most Holy Virgin has appeared at Lourdes, and that she has an interest in working miraculous cures there in order to establish and prove the reality of the apparitions. And this is true especially in the commencement, inasmuch as this event is not yet universally accredited. Let us hurry up then! There, like every other place, they that arrive first, are first served. My wife! my daughter! it is to the Madonna of Lourdes we must go for help.’

“The sixteen years that had elapsed since the birth of his child, had not, it is evident, cooled in the least the faith of M. Moreau. A novena was immediately resolved upon, in which holy exercise were associated the companions and friends of the suffering girl. By a providential circumstance one of the priests of the city had at the time a bottle of the water of the Grotto in his house; and so the novena was commenced almost immediately. In case their daughter would be cured, the parents bound themselves by vow to make a pilgrimage to Lourdes, and to clothe her in white and blue—the colors of the Most Holy Virgin, colors which she had worn until she had completed her third year. The novena was commenced on Monday evening, the 8th of November. Is it necessary to tell it? The sick girl believed little; the mother dared not hope. The father alone possessed that strong faith which the beneficent powers of heaven never resist.

“All prayed in common in M. Moreau’s room, before an image of the Most Holy Virgin. The mother, the sick girl, and her little sister rose up in succession to retire to rest; but the father remained on his knees. He alone believed, and raised his voice with such fervor as to arrest his family just on the point of retiring. They subsequently related this to M. Lasserre; and they can never think of the solemn moment without feelings of emotion.

“‘Holy Virgin,’ said the father, ‘Most Holy Virgin Mary, you ought to cure my daughter! Yes, indeed, *you ought*. It is for you an obligation, and you cannot refuse. Remember then, O Mary, that it is in spite of all, and against the wishes of all, that I have selected you to be her patron. You should remember what trials I have had to sustain to succeed in giving her your sacred name. Ah! Holy Virgin, can you forget all this? Can you forget that at the time I defended your name, your power, your glory, against the instances and vain reasoning of those around me? Can you forget that I have publicly placed this child under your protection, telling every one that this name of yours, Most Holy Virgin Mary, would bring her good luck? She was my child, I have made her yours. Can you forget her? Are you not under an obligation by the very fact, O Most Holy Virgin? Are you not obliged in honor (now that I am miserable, now that we supplicate you for our child—for your child) to come to our assistance, and heal the afflictions of the little sufferer? Will you allow her to become blind after the faith I have put in you? No! no! it is impossible; and you will cure her!’

“Such were the sentiments manifested in a loud voice

by the unhappy father, appealing to the heart of the Holy Virgin; making her in a certain manner his debtor, and calling upon her to pay the dues of grateful recognition.

“It was now ten o’clock. The young girl, just as she was going to bed, steeped in the water of Lourdes a strip of linen, with which she bandaged her eyes. Her soul was agitated. Without having her father’s strong faith, she said of her own accord that finally the Holy Virgin would be able to cure her, and that, perhaps, as soon as the novena was finished she would have recovered her sight. Then there came a doubt, and it seemed to her that a miracle would not be wrought in her favor. With all these thoughts revolving through her mind, it was with great difficulty she fixed herself to sleep; and the night was far spent ere the soothing balm of slumber diffused itself around her.

“In the morning, as soon as she awoke, her first resolve—a resolve of vague hope, and restless curiosity, was to remove the bandage from her eyes. She screamed aloud. All around her in the room was shed the light of the sun’s morning beams. She saw clearly and distinctly. The sore eye had regained its health; the eye that had been dead, was resuscitated.

“‘Martha! Martha!’ she exclaimed, calling her little sister, ‘I see! I see! I am cured!’

“Little Martha, who slept in the same room, jumped out of bed and bounded towards her. She saw that her sister’s eyes were now completely dismantled of their sanguineous coating, and that they were black and brilliant, and full of life and vigor. Her little heart turned instinctively to her father and mother, who were not yet participants in the joy.

“ ‘Papa! Mamma!’ shouted Martha. But Mary beckoned her to keep still, and said: ‘Wait, wait. I wish to try first if I can read. Give me a book.’ Martha took one from off the table, and presented it to her sister, who opened it, and read with as much freedom and ease as any one else. The cure was complete, radical, absolute, for the Blessed Virgin had not half done her work. The father and mother had by this time arrived.

“Papa! Mamma! I see, I read, I am cured!

“How can we depict this scene which baffles description? Every one can comprehend and see the feelings of joy unutterable that thrilled the bosoms of this little family, by entering into his own heart.

“The father, mother, and little Martha fell upon their knees. Mary, who was still in bed, clasped her hands: and from these four hearts overwhelmed by emotion and gratitude, burst forth the name of the Mother of God. * * * ‘O Holy Virgin! O Lady of Lourdes!’ they ejaculated in accents of praise and thanksgiving.

“We need not add that soon after Mary went with her parents to thank Our Lady of Lourdes at the Grotto of the apparitions. She laid her dress upon the altar, and put on the colors of the Queen of Virgins, happy and proud to wear them.

“M. Moreau, whose faith was at first so strong, was lost in astonishment. ‘I believed,’ said he, ‘that graces like these were accorded to the Saints alone. How does it come that such favors descend upon miserable sinners like ourselves?’

“These facts have been testified to by all the inhabitants of Tartas, who took a sympathetic interest in the afflictions of this family, which was one of the most

esteemed in the town. * * * Doctor Bermont frankly admitted the cure to be supernatural. His declaration is preserved in the Episcopal Archives of Tarbes, with a great number of letters and testimonies of the inhabitants of Tartas, and amongst them one from the Syndic, M. Desbord, figures conspicuously.

“Miss Moreau continued to wear the colors of the Virgin up to the day of her marriage, which took place soon after she had finished her studies in the Academy of the Sacred Heart. On that day she laid aside the garments of maidenhood, and assumed the raiment of the spouse. She wished to make a present of her white and blue dress to another young girl, who also was much loved by the Holy Virgin—and this was Bernadette. Having had the same mother, were they not sisters ?

“This is the only present Bernadette has ever accepted. She carried it for many years,—in fact, until it was completely worn out, its colors always reminding her of the potent Benefactress who had appeared to her in the Grotto.

“Eleven years have passed away since these events took place,” wrote M. Lasserre, in the year 1869. “The beneficence of the Holy Virgin has not yielded to the touch of time : Miss Moreau’s sight is still perfect ; she has never had a relapse, never the slightest ophthalmic affection. The lady is now called Madam d’Izarn de Villefort, and is the mother of three fine children, who have got the finest eyes in the world. Although they are boys, there is not one of them who has not got, in addition to his respective middle baptismal name, the prefix Mary.”

Pardon us, dear reader, but we cannot pass over a

third fact, which deeply moved us while reading of it. We will relate it now with the admirable simplicity with which the golden pen of M. Lasserre described it in the year 1868.

“It is now about two years since I had the honor of visiting in his own house, No. 6 Rue de Chai des Farines, Bordeaux, M. Rogger Laccassagne, an employee of the Custom-house ; and at first sight I was much surprised by the severe contour of his cold physiognomy. He asked me, with the coarse urbanity of a disciplinarian, what was the motive of my visit.

“‘Sir,’ said I, ‘I have heard an account of your journey to the Grotto of Lourdes, and, in consequence of the studies I am pursuing, have come to hear its history from your own lips.’

“At the words, *Grotto of Lourdes*, this severe face assumed a mild serenity, and the emotion produced by a sublime recollection sweetened in an instant the sternness of its expression.

“‘Take a seat,’ said this noble man, ‘and excuse me for receiving you in this room now so much in disorder. My family are going to-day to Arcachon, and you have just found us in the embarrassment of moving.’

“‘It matters not ; relate to me the events of which I have heard so much, and which I only know in a confused way.’

“‘As for me,’ he said with tears in his eyes—‘as for me I shall never forget any of the particulars as long as I live.’ . . . After a moment’s silence he resumed : ‘Sir, I have two sons. The younger, of whom alone I have to speak, is called Julius ; he will be here presently. You will see how sweet, how kind, how good he is.’

“M. Laccassagne did not tell me how much he loved

this, his younger boy. But his accents, which became so sweet, so loving while speaking of him, revealed to me the full depths of his paternal tenderness. I perceived that the noble soul that was now about to unfold itself to me, was completely centered in his son.

“ ‘The boy’s health,’ he continued, ‘had been excellent up to the age of ten years. At that time he was attacked unexpectedly, and without any apparent physical cause, by a malady, the grave nature of which, at first, I did not scan. On the 25th of January, 1865, just as we were seated at the supper-table, Julius complained of a stoppage in the throat, which prevented him from swallowing any substantial food. He was obliged to limit himself to a little soup. His condition continued unchanged. I called in M. Noguès, one of the most distinguished physicians in Toulouse. I was living in that city at the time.’

“ ‘He is suffering from a nervous attack, said the doctor to me ; and he gave me hopes of an immediate cure.’

“ ‘A few days after, in fact, the boy was able to eat, and I believed he was completely cured ; but soon the disease returned, and continued with more or less intermittant regularity up to the end of April. From that date his condition became fixed. The poor child was now obliged to be nourished exclusively on liquids—milks, soups, &c. The soup should be very clear too, because the opening that yet remained in his throat was so very narrow that it was impossible for him to swallow the smallest particle of tapioca. The poor little boy, being reduced to this meagre nourishment, began to pine away gradually. The doctors (for indeed we had two, having from the very commencement, engaged that

notoriety in medicine, Doctor Roques, in addition to Doctor Noguès), being astonished by the singularity and persistency of the affection, sought in vain to discover its precise nature, in order to determine on the remedy.

“One day, it was the 10th of May (I have suffered so much, sir, by this unfortunate affliction, and given it so much thought, that the several dates are indelibly fixed in my memory) one day I perceived Julius in the garden running with unusual swiftness, and as if by jumps. I feared the slightest agitation for him. * * * ‘Julius stand still!’ I shouted, going toward him in order to take him by the hand ; but he instantly escaped me.

“‘Papa,’ he said to me, ‘I can’t stand ; I must run, my efforts to the contrary are useless. The impelling power within me is stronger than I.’

“‘I took him on my knees : his limbs trembled convulsively. A little after his head was seized by convulsions and contorsions. The true character of the disease finally revealed itself. My unfortunate boy had become the prey of *Coreu*. Doubtless, you know, sir, what a horrible crisis this extraordinary disease ordinarily produces—

“‘No,’ said I, by way of interrogatory, ‘I do not know what the *Corea* is.’

“‘It is that disease which is vulgarly called St. Vitus’ dance.’

“Very well. Now I understand. Proceed.”

“‘The principal seat of the disease was in the throat. The changes for the worse that manifested themselves every hour in the day without interruption, established from this moment the uncertain power of medicine. Even supposing medical skill had ascertained the true

nature of the disease, it was still unable to conquer it. After fifteen months' care, the most it could accomplish was to check the external accidents, such as the agitation of the limbs and head; or to speak more accurately, these accidents disappeared of themselves in obedience to the innate power of nature. As regards the extreme narrowing of the throat, it had now assumed a chronic state that resisted every remedy. Country air, the baths of Luchon, etc., were in vain resorted to for nearly two years. These various remedies produced no other result than to irritate the patient.

“Our last remedy was sea-bathing. My wife conducted the patient to Saint Jean-de-Luz. I need not tell you that in the condition in which he was, all these physical remedies were wasted. Before everything, in fact, we wished the boy to live. From the very commencement of the disease we had suspended his studies, and forbidden labor of any kind: we cared him like a tender exotic. He is naturally of an active turn of mind, and so the restraint we put on his mental powers annoyed him considerably. The poor child began, moreover, to be ashamed of his affliction. He saw all the other boys in the enjoyment of health, while he had to bear the wretchedness of rapid decline: so he retired altogether from the society of his companions.’

“The father was so deeply moved by these sad memories that he had to stop short in his narrative for a moment, in order to rule his emotion. . . . He then resumed:

“He isolated himself. He was sad. Whenever he found a book he read it by way of antidote to his miseries. While at St. Jean-de-Luz, he found one day a

little notice of the apparitions of Lourdes lying on a table in the house of a lady who was residing in the vicinity. He read it, and, as it seems, was deeply moved. In the evening he told his mother that the Most Holy Virgin could cure him ; but the mother paid no attention to his words, regarding them as puerile utterances.

“ ‘ On our return from Bordeaux for a little previous to this date I had been transferred thence to this place) the boy was absolutely in the same state. It was the month of August last.

“ ‘ So many fruitless efforts for his recovery had overwhelmed us with grief ; and our extreme anguish made us look older by many years : perhaps, you would scarcely believe, sir, that I am only forty-six years old.’

“ ‘ I looked at the poor father—my heart was moved. I took hold of his hand and pressed it with cordial sympathy and profound compassion.

“ ‘ Meanwhile, the boy’s strength was visibly wearing out—he began to look like a waxen statue. Although I had resolved to give up all medicine, I still called in one of the most eminent physicians of Bordeaux, Doctor Gintrac, Sr., who, upon examination, discovered in addition to the narrowed condition of the alimentary canal, some rough wrinklings of the very worst import. He shook his head, and gave me small hopes ; but seeing my dreadful anxiety, added—‘ I do not say that I cannot cure him ; but he is very ill.’ He prescribed some remedies, which produced no other effect than to cause the patient trouble ; and I was advised to suspend the treatment.

“ ‘ In one of my visits to Doctor Gintrac I made known to him an idea that had engaged my mind for

some time. * * * 'It seems to me, Doctor,' said I, 'that if Julius wished, he could swallow some nourishment. Perhaps this difficulty springs from fear—that because he did not eat yesterday, he cannot eat to-day. In such case, the disease would be imaginary, and could be cured by moral remedies only.' The Doctor cleared away this illusion.

“‘You deceive yourself,’ he said; ‘the disease is in the organs, which are, indeed, very much impaired. I have not confined myself to an ocular examination, because my eyes could possibly lead me into error, but have had recourse to the aid of an instrument, by means of which I have been enabled to touch minutely with my finger the disordered members. The esofagus is covered with wrinkled coatings, and the canal has become so narrowed that it is *materially impossible* for the boy to use any nourishment except liquids, which naturally reduce their proportions to the measure of the canal, and can, therefore, flow through the needle-eye opening that yet remains. A single millimetre more of swelling of the tissues, and the patient will be choked. The beginning of the disease, the changes from well to ill that have characterised its progress, the momentary interruptions in its course, furthermore corroborate my material observations. Your son, had he once been cured, would have remained so, if the disease were in the imagination. But it is too true that it exists in the organs.’

“‘These observations which had been already made to me in Toulouse, were too conclusive not to convince me. I returned home with the shadows of death brooding in my soul. What was to be done? * * * Evidently our poor boy was irreparably lost. Sir, such

cruel convictions enter with difficulty into a father's heart. I endeavored to flatter myself that I was deceived. My wife and I consulted together. * * * I thought of having recourse to hydrotherapy. It was in such a desperate and hopeless crisis that Julius said to his mother in a tone of confidence—nay, of absolute certainty that was surprising: 'Don't you see, mamma? Neither Doctor Gintrac, nor any other physician, can cure my disease. It is the Most Holy Virgin that will cure me. Send me to the Grotto of Lourdes, and you will see that I shall be cured. I am certain of it.'

" 'My wife made known to me this proposition. * * * 'Do not hesitate about it!' I exclaimed. 'We must take him to Lourdes, and that immediately.'

" 'It is not, sir, that I had faith. I did not believe in miracles, and did not consider these extraordinary interventions of the Deity possible. But I was a father, and, therefore, no suggestion made to me was undervalued. I moreover hoped that, beside these supernatural interventions, which I did not admit, a salutary moral effect would be thereby produced in the boy. As regards a complete cure, you understand, sir, that I never as much as indulged a thought. We were in the commencement of February. The weather was bad, and I feared to expose Julius to the slightest inclemency of the season. I wished to wait for a fine day. The idea that came to his mind eight months previously by reading at St. Jean-de-Luz the little notice in the paper, and which he made known to us, Julius had never abandoned. This faith, so full and so complete, was the more extraordinary in as much as we had not brought up our boy in the habit of overwrought devotion. My wife complied with her religious duties—but that was all; and as regarded myself, as I

have said, my philosophic notions led me a different road.

“ ‘The 12th of February was a lovely day. We took the train for Tarbes. During the journey the boy was cheerful, and full of perfect faith in the certainty of being cured—a faith so strong that it confounded me. * * * ‘I shall be cured,’ he said to me every moment. ‘You will see. A great many others have been cured: why shall not I be cured, too? The Most Holy Virgin is ready to cure me.’

“ ‘And I shared this great confidence without dividing it—a confidence which I would qualify as being of such a nature as to astound me, did I not fear to be wanting in respect to God who had infused it into him. At Tarbes, in the Hotel Dupont, where we put up, the poor boy’s face was noticed for its pale and emaciated expression, as well as for its suavity and gracefulness. Every one loved to gaze upon the boy. At the hotel I related the object of our journey. The vows these good people poured forth for us, I regarded as a happy omen. And when we were departing, I saw well that our return would be looked for with impatience. To be prepared for the issue, notwithstanding all my doubts, I took with me a small box of biscuit.

“ ‘When we arrived at the crypt, which is over the Grotto, Mass was being celebrated. Julius prayed with a faith that was visible in every action, and with an ardor truly heavenly. The poor little angel was transfigured. The priest was surprised at his fervor, and having finished Mass and disrobed in the sacristy, hurried out to join us. A good thought had come into his mind while noticing the little boy. He informed me of it, and then turning to Julius, who was yet on his knees,

said : ‘ My child, do you wish that I consecrate you to the Most Holy Virgin ?’

“ ‘ Yes ! yes !’ replied Julius.

“ ‘ The priest commenced the simple ceremony at once, and recited over the boy the formula prescribed by the Church. * * * ‘ And now, father, I am going to be cured,’ he exclaimed with a confidence in his words that surprised me.

“ ‘ We descended into the Grotto. Julius knelt before the statue of the Virgin and prayed. I gazed on him, and I see yet the lovely expression of his face, and the fervor of his attitude as he joined his hands in supplication. He arose : we went to the fountain.

“ ‘ This was a terrible moment.

“ ‘ He washed his neck and breast. Then he took the glass and drank a few drops of the miraculous water. He was calm and happy ; cheerful and radiant with confidence. As for me I trembled and became so overpowered as almost to faint away in presence of this last test ; but I endeavored, though with difficulty, to check my emotion. I did not wish the boy to become cognizant of the doubtings of my heart. I handed him a biscuit, and asked him to try if he could eat it.

“ ‘ He took it : I turned my head aside, for I did not have strength in me to look upon this test. It was, in fact, the life or death of my child that had now to be decided. In such circumstances, terrible for the heart of a father, I was playing, so to speak, my last card. Did I fail, my dearest Julius was dead. The test was decisive, and I had not courage to confront the spectacle. I was soon freed from this harrowing anguish. The voice of Julius—a sweet, joyful voice, fell upon my ears :

“ ‘Father ! I can swallow the food ; I can eat ! I am sure of it ; I have faith in my cure !’

“ ‘What a stroke, sir ! My child with one foot in the grave, was cured, and in a moment. And I, his father, was a witness of this surprising resurrection. It was fortunate that, in order not to disturb the boy’s faith, I had sufficient presence of mind not to manifest my astonishment.

“ ‘Yes, my son, it was certain you would be cured, nor could it be otherwise,’ I said in a voice that all the energy of my will had barely succeeded in rendering calm. And still, sir, my feelings were tempest-tossed. Had my breast been laid bare, it would have been found seethed as if by fire. We repeated the test. He eat still more biscuit, not only without difficulty but with an increasing appetite. I was obliged to restrain him. I was forced to proclaim my felicity, and to thank God.

“ ‘Wait for me,’ said I to Julius, ‘and pray to the good Virgin. I will go up to the chapel. And leaving him a moment on his knees in the Grotto, I hurried to tell the priest the glad tidings. He was transported with joy. Notwithstanding my felicity so unexpected and so sudden, notwithstanding the confusion of my feelings, I felt my heart and soul inexpressibly worked upon. My confused, agitated and tumultuous thoughts were revolutionized. All my philosophic views began to waver and crumble within me.

“ ‘The priest descended in a hurry and saw Julius finishing his last biscuit. The Bishop of Tarbes happened to be at the chapel that same day. He wished to see my son. I told him the history of his terrible affliction, which had just had so happy a termination. All embraced the child and congratulated me. I was

thinking, meantime, of the mother, and the happiness that was in store for her. Before returning to the hotel I went to the telegraph office. My dispatch contained but one word: *Cured!* Scarce had the word been transmitted than I wished to retract it. Perhaps, said I to myself, I have been in too great a hurry. Who knows but there may be a relapse?

“‘I did not dare believe in the felicity of which I had been the recipient; and when I did flatter myself into a belief in its existence, my happiness seemed to fly me. As regards the boy, his happiness was not disturbed in the least. He was buoyant with joy, and possessed of perfect certainty.

“‘You see well, father,’ he repeated every moment, ‘there was no one but the Most Holy Virgin could cure me.’ And when he said so, I was sure of it.

“‘At the hotel he eat with a good appetite. I could not refrain from watching him. He wished to return to the Grotto to thank his liberator; and we did so.

“‘You ought to be grateful to the Most Holy Virgin,’ said a priest, while, with a gesture, he pointed to the image of the Virgin, and then to heaven.

“‘Ah! I shall never forget her,’ he exclaimed.

“‘At Tarbes we rested at the same hotel from which we had set out in the morning. We were expected. A happy presentiment of our good fortune had been felt by the good people staying there; and now they manifested extraordinary joy. They gathered around us with real pleasure to see the boy, who in the morning could not swallow a spoonful of liquid, now partake of everything that was served up. It must be remembered that he had been suffering for two years and seventeen days.

“ ‘ We were in a hurry to see mother. We took the express train to Bordeaux. The boy overcome by the fatigues of the journey, and I should say, by his emotion, too, on reaching home wished to retire to bed, and so did not take supper. His mother having seen him so completely tired out, and unwilling to eat—she who had come to greet us with at least some joyful anticipations, became the prey of terrible misgivings, and was sad beyond description. She said I had deceived her ; and even I myself had experienced great mental difficulty in forcing myself into belief. But what was her joy on the following morning when our Julius sat at the table, and took breakfast with a better appetite than ourselves ! Then only was she tranquil and convinced.’

“ ‘ And after this moment,’ I asked, ‘ was there no relapse—no change ?’

“ ‘ No, sir ; most decidedly nothing. I cannot say whether the cure had advanced by progressive steps, or had been consolidated ; but indeed it was as complete as if it had been the work of a moment. . . . The general state of the boy’s health improved perceptibly in obedience to the power of a restorer, whose salutary effects it was time for him to have experienced. * * * Doctor Roques, of Toulouse, recognized the precise and positive action of a Superior Being in the case, as he conscientiously declared in his letter of the 24th of February. * * * In fine, this occurrence has made me acknowledge God ; and my grateful recognitions shall endure for ever. * * * From that day to this, Julius has been angelically pious. He is the joy of his teachers and school-fellows, and our consolation.’

“ At this moment the door opened, and Julius entered the room with his mother. I laid my hands on his head

and embraced him tenderly. The glow of health was on his cheeks. 'You are a happy father,' I said to M. Lacassagne.

"'Yes, sir; very happy. But my wife and I have suffered much.'

"'Bewail your sufferings no longer,' I said to him, moving a little away from Julius. 'This ordeal of suffering was the way that led you from darkness to light, from death to life, and elevated you out of yourself up to God. At Lourdes the Most Holy Virgin has twice shown herself the mother of the living. She has given your son temporal life, in order to give you that true life which shall never end.'

"I took my leave of this family so favored by God; and with a heart deeply impressed by what I had seen and heard, have written this narration." Thus wrote Henry Lasserre.

Enter into yourself, dear reader, and make the following

MEDITATION ON CONFIDENCE IN MARY.

I. Consider what great confidence you should place in Mary, because she is *powerful*. The Holy Fathers, with one voice, tell you that Mary's power to obtain graces from God is very great; that she can do by prayer what God can by his natural attributes. *Quod Deus imperio tu prece, Virgo, potes*. And again, that at the throne of God she commands rather than asks. *Non impetrat sed imperat*. * * * Oh! what a foundation on which to place confidence in her!

II. Consider that another groundwork on which to base our confidence in Mary is her *goodness*. She is all

good, all clement, all benign. Dante writes of her, (Parad. xxxiii.):

La tua benignità non pur soccorre
A chi domanda, ma molte fiato
Liberamente al domandar precorre.

* Not only him, who asks,
Thy bounty succors; but doth freely oft
Forerun the asking.

Why then do you not have recourse to her with confidence?

III. Mary deserves all our confidence, because she is *our Mother*. Can a mother be deaf to the cries of her children? * * * Can she close her heart against their supplications? Has it ever been known that any one who invoked her with faith and perseverance, had not been heard?

Revive your confidence in her, and ask her for all the graces you stand in need of.

Practice.—Recite to-day seven *Salve Reginas* for yourself and all the poor sick.

Ejaculation.—*Spes nostra salve*. Hail! Mary Immaculate of Lourdes; hail thou who art our hope!

CHAPTER VI.

The Wished-for Decision.

“Thou art the joy of Israel.” Judith xv. 10.

Let us commence this chapter by recording a fact

* Rev. H. F. Cary.

which took place in Rome during the pontificate of Benedict XIV.

An English Protestant was arguing with a Cardinal on the Catholic Religion, assailing it with great vigor, and, above all, rejecting as false the miracles worked by the intercession of the Saints. Shortly after the Cardinal happened to be engaged in examining documents relative to the Beatification of a servant of God. He sent the papers one day to the Protestant, asking him to examine them attentively, and to give him his views on the amount of faith the testimonies deserved. After a day or so, the Englishman returned them—"Well, now, sir," asked the Prelate, "what is your impression with regard to the process of canonization?"

"Your Eminence, I confess I have got nothing to say; and if all the miracles of the Saints whom your Church canonizes, were as well established as these, I would have cause to reflect. * * * God alone could do these things, and it would be necessary to admit that He is with you."

"Indeed?" replied the Cardinal; "and still we in Rome are more fastidious in our investigations than you, since these proofs do not seem to us convincing, and the cause has therefore been rejected." The Englishman had been so struck by the scrutinizing process invariably employed by the Church, that he studied the Catholic Religion more profoundly, and abjured Protestantism before he left Rome.

Now, then, the Church wishes the same caution to be used whenever facts that may be supernatural, are to be decided; and the reader can judge for himself if it has been employed, pending the process touching the work of God at Lourdes.

The Examining Commission having terminated its labors, sent the most minute and detailed report of the case to the Bishop. The examination had been conducted conscientiously, and characterized throughout for completeness and profundity. The extraordinary facts of the case were transparent, and were accurately known by the people. The declarations and the conclusions of chemistry and medicine, harmoniously blending together, were formal and peremptory. The Bishop could not but be convinced, as indeed he was. Still, through a spirit of extreme prudence, which we have several times noticed as characteristic of Mons. Laurence, before pronouncing his Episcopal decision on this great question, he required a new endorsement of the miraculous cures—the endorsement of time. He allowed three years to pass by; at the expiration of which, he ordered a second Commission to examine the case. The supernatural cures had continued. No one presented himself to retract his first testimony, or to dispute the facts. The works of Him, who reigns throughout eternity, have nothing to fear from the proofs of time.

It was not until after this superabundant series of demonstrations, proofs and certainties, that Mons. Laurence gave the decision expected from him. We give the principal extracts.

He commences by promising that in every age there have been wonderful communications between heaven and earth. In the Old Testament we see God himself appearing to our first parents, to the patriarchs, and the prophets, and sending His angels in visible form on earth. And so also in the New Testament do we find these communications, especially apparitions of the

Most Holy Virgin in divers places, thus inaugurating celebrated sanctuaries.

Then full of gratitude to God, he announces new apparitions of the Blessed Virgin in the Grotto of Lourdes to the little girl Soubirous, which he summarises. The sage prelate then proceeds: "The little girl has seen and heard a Being calling herself the Immaculate Conception, and who, though clothed in human form, had not been seen or heard by the numerous spectators present at the time. Consequently, this must have been a supernatural being. What think we of this occurrence? The Church very wisely uses leisure in forming an estimate of supernatural facts; and must have certain proofs before she admits and proclaims them to be divine. * * * Wherefore, have we studied for four years, the fact about which we now speak. * * * We have placed it before a commission of pious, learned and experienced priests, who have questioned the girl, studied the details of the case, examined and weighed everything. We have called, besides, the authority of science to our aid, and have become convinced that the apparitions are supernatural and divine, and that consequently, the person seen by Bernadette, is the Most Holy Virgin. Our conviction rests on the testimony of Bernadette, but above all, upon the facts that have taken place, and which cannot be explained except by attributing them to divine agency.

"The testimonies of the little girl furnish us all the guarantees we can desire. And in the first place, her sincerity cannot be doubted. On approaching her, who does not admire the simplicity, the candor, the modesty of this child? While every one speaks of the wonders that have been revealed to her, she alone is silent. She

speaks not except when interrogated; and then she relates everything without affectation, and with touching ingenuousness; while to the numerous questions put her, she gave, unhesitatingly, answers precise, perfectly to the point, and bearing the impress of strong conviction. Having been submitted to grave tests, threats could not disturb her. To the most generous offers she replied with noble disinterestedness. Always consistent with herself, she has, during the various interviews to which she has been forced to submit, constantly maintained what she had already said, without increase or diminution. Bernadette's sincerity is, therefore, indisputable. Even her antagonists, whenever she met them, have rendered her this homage.

“But admitting Bernadette to have had no intention of deceiving others, might she not have been deceived herself? Has she not, perchance, believed she saw and heard things she did not see or hear? Was she not the victim of illusion? Why should we believe her? The wisdom of her answers proved that the girl's mind was well balanced; that her imagination was calm, and that she had sense superior to her age. Religious sentiment has never betrayed in her a tendency to self-exaltation, or produced in her a disordered intellect, or impaired her senses, nor made her self-conceited, or the victim of any morbid affection which could possibly have disposed her to imaginary creations. She had seen the Vision not only once, but eighteen times. The first time she saw it suddenly, and without any preparatory notice; while during the fortnight, although she expected to see it every day, there were two occasions on which she saw nothing, though placed in identical circumstances. And then, what happened during the

apparitions? She was transformed; her countenance assumed a new expression; her eyes became brilliant; she saw things she had not seen before, and listened to a language never before heard by her—a language whose meaning she did not always understand, but whose phraseology is stamped upon her memory. This association of circumstances does not permit us, in the least, to believe that the girl had been the prey of hallucination: the fact is she has really seen a Being who called herself the Immaculate Conception; and this phenomenon being naturally inexplicable, we are, therefore, warranted in believing it the work of supernatural agency.

“Bernadette’s testimony, important in itself, acquires new force—nay more, its complement, from the wonderful events that have happened since the first apparition. If the tree must be judged by its fruit, we can assert that the apparition related by the girl, is supernatural and divine, because it has produced effects that are supernatural and divine. Now, what has happened? The apparition had been scarcely known of, when the news flew with the rapidity of lightening. It was known that Bernadette would go during fifteen days to the Grotto, and lo! the whole country precedes her. The tide of human beings flows fast towards the holy place. The solemn moment is waited for with religious impatience; and while the little girl, transported out of herself, is absorbed by the object she contemplates, the witnesses of this wonder, moved and softened by the celestial manifestation, share with her the self-same sentiments of admiration and prayer.

“The apparitions have ceased, but crowds of pilgrims from far and near, still continue to go to the Grotto.

People of all ages, stations and conditions are seen to assemble there. And what sentiment impels those numerous visitors thither? Ah! they go to the Grotto to ask favors of Mary Immaculate. They demonstrate by their devout and recollected attitude, that they feel the divine breath that animates that lonely rock, now so celebrated. Christian souls have been strengthened in virtue; men rendered ice-cold by indifferentism, have been brought back to the practice of religion; obstinate sinners have been reconciled to God, after the Madonna of Lourdes had been invoked in their favor. These wonders of grace, which bear the stamp of universality and duration, cannot have an author, save God. Is not, therefore, the truth of the apparitions established?

“If from the salutary effects produced in souls, we pass on to those that relate to the health of the body, what new prodigies do we not meet with?”

Here he relates the gushing forth of the fountain where Bernadette drank and washed in presence of the multitude, and resumes:

“The sick have tasted the water of the Grotto, and not without having experienced salutary results. Many whose diseases had resisted the most energetic treatment, have suddenly regained health. These cures resounded loudly, and the echoes of their fame soon spread all around. Invalids in all the surrounding towns asked for the water of Massabielle, when they were not able to go themselves to the Grotto. How many have been cured? How many families have received consolation? * * * Did we wish to call for their testimonies, countless tongues would proclaim in tones of gratitude the sovereign efficacy of the water of the Grotto. We cannot here enumerate all the favors ob-

tained: but what we must say is this, that the water of Massabielle has cured invalids who had been given up, and pronounced incurable. Their restoration to health has been effected by the use of a water devoid of all natural curative properties, as the most able chemists, who have carefully analyzed it, relate. These recoveries have been produced, some instantaneously, others by two or three applications of the water used either as a drink, or as a lotion. Moreover, these cures are permanent. What power has produced them? Has organic force? Science has answered "*No.*" Therefore, they are the work of God. But they are referred to the Apparition: this is their starting point; this it is has inspired confidence in the invalids: therefore, there is a close connection between the cures and the Apparition. The Apparition is divine, because the cures are stamped with the seal of the Divinity. But whatever comes from God is truth; therefore the Apparition, who called herself the Immaculate Conception, and whom Bernadette has seen and heard, is the Most Holy Virgin. Let us therefore exclaim: The finger of God is here. *Digitus Dei est hic.*

"How can we fail to admire the economy of Divine Providence? At the close of the year 1854, the immortal Pius IX. proclaimed the dogma of the Immaculate Conception. The words of the Pontiff were echoed throughout the bounds of the earth. The hearts of the Catholic world throbbed with joy. Every where this glorious privilege of Mary was celebrated with feasts, the memory of which shall ever remain impressed upon our mind. And behold! about three years afterwards, the Most Holy Virgin appears to a little girl and says: 'I am the Immaculate Conception. * * * I wish

a chapel to be erected here in my honor.' Is it not plain that she wishes to consecrate with a monument the infallible oracle of the successor of St. Peter?

"And where does she wish this monument to be erected? At the foot of our Pyrenean mountains, a locality where assemble the numerous strangers, who come from all parts to recover their health at our hot-water baths. Would it not be truly said that she calls the faithful of all nations to gather there to worship her in the new temple that shall be erected to her name?"

Then he invites the citizens of Lourdes, and the faithful throughout his whole diocese to rejoice, and solemnly gives his decision :

"Art. I. We judge that the Immaculate Mary, Mother of God, did really appear to Bernadette Soubirous, on the 11th of February, 1858, and on the following days up to the eighteenth time, in the Grotto of Massabielle, near the City of Lourdes; that this Apparition bears all the marks of truth, and that the faithful are justified in believing it certain. We humbly submit our judgment to the judgment of the Sovereign Pontiff, who is charged with the guidance of the universal Church.

"Art. II. In order to comply with the will of the Most Holy Virgin, often manifested in the apparitions, we purpose to build a sanctuary on the site of the Grotto. * * * We appeal to all the pious persons in the towns all around, who cherish devotion to the Immaculate Conception of the Virgin Mary, etc."

Behold, in fine, the decision so long wished for by all the truly devoted of the Immaculate Virgin of Lourdes—a decision which brought joy unutterable to their hearts.

Enter into yourself, my reader, and with a heart filled with gladness, make the following

MEDITATION ON MARY, OUR JOY.

I. Consider how the Church calls Mary *the cause of our joy*.—*Causa nostræ letitiæ*. To her apply the words: *Thou art the joy of Israel*. The Church says that when we think of Mary, we rejoice. *Cujus commemoratione lætamur*. She compares this privileged creature to every thing that brings joy to the world—to the morning star, to the aurora, to the moon, to the sun. * * * What beautiful instruction for us. * * * Let us reflect.

II. Consider how *we ourselves experience this truth in our hearts*. When you commence a devotion in her honor, when you pray to her, offer her your heart, meditate on her, celebrate her feasts, kneel at the foot of her altars, is it not true that you rejoice, and feel in your heart an enchanting sweetness, a joy that nothing can equal? How sweet are the invitations of Mary, your Mother! Do you correspond?

III. Consider, moreover, how devoid of sense you are if you do not seek in her most amiable heart, in her love, and in devotion to her, joy in your sorrows, consolation in your affliction, relief in your troubles. * * * How stupid you are, if on the other hand you think you shall find all this in the false joys of this world.

Practice.—Recite the *Ave Maris Stella* for those who are suffering afflictions and tribulations.

Ejaculation.—*Causa nostræ letitiæ, ora pro nobis*. O Mary Immaculate of Lourdes! cause of our joy, pray for us.

CHAPTER VII.

The Holy Chapel.

“ We will go into His tabernacle : we will adore in the place where His feet stood.” Psalm cxxxi., 7.

In the seventh apparition, which took place on the 23d of February, the Immaculate Virgin said to Bernadette : “ And now, my daughter, go—go tell the priests that I wish a chapel to be erected here to me.” And as the pastor of Lourdes, like a prudent man, did not immediately believe, and asked for a sign, she repeated her message in the thirteenth apparition, which took place on the 2d of March. This second embassy was well received by the parish priest, who immediately repaired to the Bishop to inform him of the matter. Exceedingly circumspect as he was, the Bishop allowed about five months to pass before he issued his pastoral, by virtue of which he instituted a commission to examine the case ; and finally on the 18th of January, 1862, by a second pastoral, in which he admitted the reality of the apparitions, announced his intention to build a chapel at the Grotto, and appealed to the generosity of the faithful of the diocese, of all France, and of the world at large to concur in bearing the expenses.

Great was the effect of this invitation. From all quarters poured in large offerings, which soon amounted to a considerable sum. The Bishop’s first act was to purchase from the Municipality of Lourdes in the name of the See of Tarbes, the Grotto and the land surrounding it, and all the environs of the rocks of Massabielle. Providence of God, that plays throughout the universe ! The very Syndic, who had given the fact of the apparitions such untoward opposition, was the man to pro-

pose the sale of the property to the municipal Council, and draw out the deeds. And the very Minister of Worship, who had so ignobly resisted the work of God, authorized the sale of the property, and the building of a temple to the Immaculate Conception. The land having been secured, architects were engaged to study the design of the temple. First a plan was drawn of a small church, but still one of graceful proportions; but when the architect one day presented it to the Curé Peyramale in the presence of many ecclesiastics and laymen, on the very site of the miraculous fountain, he cast on it a glance, and, fired with indignation, tore it to pieces and cast it into the Gave.

“What are you doing?” exclaimed the architect in amazement.

“You see it,” replied the priest. “I am angered at what human misery dares to offer to the Mother of God. What is to be erected here in memory of the great events that have taken place, is not a cramped little village church, but a marble temple of such colossal proportions as the summit of the rocks of Massabielle will admit of, and magnificent as your genius can conceive. To the work, Mr. Architect. Let your genius do its utmost; let nothing prevent you from giving us a chef-d’œuvre; and bear in mind that were you a Michael Angelo, your genius would fail to conceive a design worthy of the Virgin who has appeared in this place.”

“But Rev. Pastor”—and he scanned him minutely, “to accomplish what you say millions would be needed.”

“She who knew how to make this living water spring from the sterile rock, shall well know how to render the hearts of the faithful generous,” replied the priest. “Go

ahead fearlessly. Why do you doubt, you Christians of little faith?"

The temple was designed according to the suggestions of the man of God. But the site was craggy, and the rock rough; the mountain rose up just in the way, and the canal and the Gave flowed nigh. From the city of Lourdes there were no streets leading thither. What an amount of work was to be done? But the fervent Pastor, in whose ears ever resounded the message sent him by the Virgin through Bernadette, was indefatigable and restless. Now he encouraged the workmen, now overhauled the work, and even hurried on its progress by the labor of his own sacred hands. And under his vigilant eye soon streets were opened from the city to Massabielle, and pathways leading from the Grotto to the summit of the rock, were carefully laid out. The lands all round underwent alteration. Trees were planted and flowers sown. The course of the canal was changed, and even the bed of the river itself. The hollows along the river's left bank were filled up by contributions from the elevated grounds; and thus was formed a beautiful plane. The Grotto was enclosed by an iron railing after the fashion of a chapel; and finally the work commenced on the summit of the rock of Massabielle. It was necessary to cut away the top of it, and by means of pickaxes and mining to extend the plane of the foundation—now by springing lofty arches, now by filling in yawning precipices. The purest gothic style was adopted—the idea having been suggested by the form of the niche in which the Most Holy Virgin appeared. The crypt was built, and over it the temple proper with its lofty campanile towering to the height of over one hundred metres from the plane below.

The expense was estimated to reach the sum of two millions ; but now between the church and its appendages, the house of the Missionaries, and the Hospitals now in course of erection, it must have already exceeded *five millions*, and the building still continues.

The chapels of the Rosary are to be built, and surely the money will not be wanting. Without asking for it, it will be freely given by the pilgrims of all nations.

And now, my reader, rest here, and reflect first how the wish of the Immaculate Virgin has been punctually fulfilled by the generous liberality of her children ; and next call to mind the actual state of the world. Our age has been called the age of light, of progress, and unprejudiced opinion ; by others, the age of materialism, of carnal instincts, and of the passions ; by others, the age of money and avarice. And yet, in the latter half of this very age, without material interests, and without force, five millions are found to spend on a temple to the Madonna. Ah ! explain to me you this generosity independent of supernatural intervention ! As for me, I have always been of this opinion. When the nations, for such "moonshine," as it is called, put their hands into their purses already so drained out by contributions, take out their money, and give generously, I say they are convinced, and, therefore, have reasons for their conviction ; and these reasons are that they see and feel that the miraculous work of God is there. And such being the case, exclaim in union with the pilgrims of Lourdes : "Long live the Immaculate Conception ! Long live the Madonna of Lourdes !" and make the following

MEDITATION ON MARY'S SANCTUARIES.

I. Consider how the Most Holy Virgin Mary *wishes sanctuaries to be built to her*. The one at Lourdes she asked for herself, as she did many others, explicitly or implicitly in the various epochs of the Church, and in different towns. Such is, more or less, the origin of over a hundred sanctuaries, which in Italy alone are dedicated to Mary, out of the twelve hundred that have been raised to her in Europe, and the fifteen hundred throughout the world. What joy to think of this great honor rendered to Mary!

II. Consider how *Mary scatters her graces in them*. As God with regard to the temple of Solomon, so Mary with regard to her sanctuaries, says: "I have chosen, and have sanctified this place, that my name may be there for ever, and my eyes and my heart may remain there perpetually." (2, Paral. vii. 16). And history proves how true this is. * * * Have not you yourself ever experienced it?

III. Consider the *consequence* of these two truths you have meditated on—namely, the care you should have according to your state, of these sanctuaries; the esteem in which you should hold them; the importance you should attach to them, by contributing according to your means to their preservation and embellishment, and by praying for your necessities within their holy precincts. * * * Do you do this?

Practice.—Give as generous an offering as you can to a sanctuary or chapel dedicated to the Immaculate Virgin Mary.

Ejaculation.—*Domus aurea, ora pro nobis.* O Immaculate Virgin Mary, you who are a house of gold, pray for us.

CHAPTER VIII.

The Pilgrimages and the Processions to Lourdes.

“Thy sons shall come from afar, and thy daughters shall rise up at thy side”—Isaias, lx. 4.

For a Christian soul sincerely devoted to the Most Holy Immaculate Virgin, the anxiety which her children at Lourdes manifested in corresponding with her desires, is a thought full of consolation. In the first two apparitions the Blessed Virgin spoke not a word; but in the third she said: “I wish to see many persons assembled here;” and in the seventh: “I wish processions to be made to the Grotto.” I wish to see great crowds of people, and these in processions. Let us unite these two desires, on account of their material similarity. The knowledge of them, borne on the lips of Bernadette, passed from mouth to mouth, and lo! numbers are stirred up with anxiety to respond to the most Holy Virgin’s invitation, and even to this day they respond to it by pilgrimages and processions. Let us discuss these points in the present chapter.

The Prophet Isaias, foretelling the great numbers that in days to come would enter the Catholic Church said of her: “Thy sons shall come from afar, and thy daughters shall rise up at thy side.” These are words precisely applicable to the Most Holy Virgin, the Mother of the Catholic Church. Yes, to the Madonna, who appeared at Lourdes, these words can be referred: Rejoice, Virgin Mary, your sons shall come to you from afar, and your daughters shall rise up at your side, by reason of so many countless pilgrimages to that blessed city.

From the earliest ages of the Church there have been pilgrimages—that is to say, devotional and penitential journeys from one's own home to distant countries and towns, there to visit the holy places upon which Heaven has shed its choicest favors, to pray before the relics of the Apostles, and of the Martyrs, or to meditate on divine truths in some renowned sanctuary. Hence do we find the pilgrimages to Rome, to the tombs of the Apostles, to Jerusalem, to St. James of Compostella, in Spain, and to the House of the Blessed Virgin in Loretto, crowned with holy celebrity. The Church, although having had in many Councils to check the abuses and correct the disorders that have crept into pilgrimages, has still always approved of them as a holy and a pious work. Now no pilgrimage has ever received such grand development as that to the Madonna of Lourdes in our own time, precisely because men did not formerly have these means of rapid transit—namely, the steamboat and the railway, which modern science has invented. The Pyrenean railway, which was first planned to run in a more direct line, and at less expense, between Tarbes and Pau, was altered to pass through Lourdes; and now it is continually bringing, from all parts of the world, pilgrims, whose holy and sole object is to pray to the Most Holy Virgin who appeared at the Grotto. These devout travelers come not only from the French provinces, but from England, Belgium, Spain, Italy, Germany, Russia, and even from distant America beyond the ocean. How consoling to see the railroads—that grand invention which sheds so much lustre on modern genius, contributing, in the hands of Providence, to the glory of God and of His Holy Mother, and serving, as

the Church prays in the benediction she pronounces upon them, to make the faithful run more rapidly in obedience to the laws of God, and in the way of His Commandments! How consoling to see these steam-cars changed, as it were, into so many chariots of the Ethiopian, Eunuch of Queen Candace, in which the Divine Scriptures are meditated upon by the pious tourists, and faith and divine grace are increased within their souls by the exhortations of the priests, even as by the instructions of Philip the Deacon.*

We have already seen that from the time of the apparitions the pilgrims, who assembled at the Grotto, amounted, in one day alone, to the immense number of over twenty thousand. Far from diminishing, the numbers have increased. From 1858 to 1864 the pilgrims went to Lourdes either dispersedly or in companies,

* The Christian, who follows the precept of St. Paul—namely, whether you eat, or drink, or do anything else, do all for the glory of God—can, while traveling by rail, become imbued with the spirit of the Church in this respect, as manifested in the blessing of railroads and cars. “Omnipotent and eternal God, who hast created all the elements for Thy glory, and for the benefit of mankind, deign to bless this railroad, and all the appliances connected with it, and protect them always by Thy divine providence, to the end that while Thy servants run rapidly along the track, they may be enabled, by walking in the path of Thy law and commandments, happily to arrive at their heavenly country. Bless, O Lord, these carriages with Thy sacred right hand, and give them in charge to Thy holy Angels, that they may protect and defend the passengers from all the dangers that beset them; and as to the Ethiopian, who sat reading the Sacred Scriptures in his chariot, Thou didst grant faith and grace through Thy Levite, Philip, so, too, show the road of salvation to Thy servants, that being helped by Thy grace, and ever intent on good works, they may, after having passed through all the changes of this journey and of this life, be found worthy to attain eternal joy.”

but not in processional form. The first great procession was formed on the 4th of April, 1864, when the magnificent statue of white Carrarian marble, with a blue girdle, and around its head the golden inscription "*I am the Immaculate Conception,*" was blessed and erected with great pomp in the rustic niche of the Grotto in which the Virgin appeared to Bernadette. Such a procession had never been seen before. Troops of soldiers in gala costume led the way, then followed, each bearing its own peculiar banner, the confraternities of Lourdes, the Benevolent Societies, all the Corporations of these districts with their banners and their cross, eight other large associations, four hundred Priests, the Canons of Lourdes, and the Mons. Bishop—in all from fifty to sixty thousand people, gladdened with vocal and instrumental music, and all the festive magnificence that the grandeur of Catholic functions and popular enthusiasm, when at its acme, can suggest. Two persons only who had had the first part in the facts of the Grotto, were absent—poor Bernadette lying sick in the hospital, because of her extreme poverty; and the Curé Peyramale, who was also very seriously ill. Providence of God, always adorable in His inscrutable decrees!

After this many other processions of pilgrims went to the holy Grotto; still as the temple and the roads leading from the city of Lourdes to the Rock of Massabielle were in course of construction, these processions were unable to assume a fixed character up to 1866 or 1867. From this epoch I will now give you some statistics relative to the number of the pilgrimages and the processions. Within nine years there have been 680 grand processions to Lourdes, numbering in all 556,000 pilgrims from all the French Provinces, from Belgium,

Germany, Italy, and America. England and Ireland are at present organizing pilgrimages thither.

And it is well to note here that these great processions were not made up exclusively of women. Commencing from the year 1868, a procession of 900 men from Bayonne arrived in Lourdes. Over 1,000 Vandals, exclusively men, defied the rigors of winter in the month of November, 1872. In 1874, 4,000 men of the diocese of Rodez furnished a spectacle that made all France wonder, and was the decisive signal of its grand religious movement. In 1875, 9,000 men journeyed forth from Bayonne, and were followed by 3,400 from Carcassone, 2,700 from Perigueux, 7,500 from Auch; the inhabitants of Toulouse and other southern cities were preparing, but having been detained by the floods, they finished the year in the depth of winter, over 20,000 men from Tarbes, whilst those from Toulouse, having been impeded the year before, numbered 11,000 in their procession on Easter Tuesday, the 18th of April, 1876.

Nothing equals the grandeur of these pilgrimages of the male sex. With the cross upon their breasts, their beads in hand, and their lips employed in prayer and spiritual canticles, they are disheartened neither by snow nor rain, the wintery blast nor the summer sun. Their only trouble is that when they are so numerous, they cannot find an inclosure sufficiently large to allow them to receive Holy Communion in a body. And be it understood that all we have spoken of is independent of the great French national pilgrimage of the 6th of October 1872, on which memorable day over 40,000 persons assembled at Lourdes, and presented their solemn homage to the Mother of God, having unfurled the four hundred banners of their respective parishes

and dioceses, and of the sanctuaries of Mary, ancient and modern.

And now, dear reader, consider all this, and join to it the 100,000 people, the 35 Bishops, the 3,000 Priests, who assembled at Lourdes about the commencement of July last, to assist at the feast of the Consecration of the Basilica, and the Coronation of the statue of the Madonna; finish by taking a glance at the second Italian pilgrimage, lately made, and at so many others from divers parts of the world, and tell me then if the prophecy of Isaias has not been fulfilled in Immaculate Mary of Lourdes: "Lift up thy eyes round about, and see; all these are gathered together, they are come to thee; thy sons shall come from afar, and thy daughters shall rise up at thy side." Tell me if it is not a consoling reflection that the desire manifested by the Holy Virgin for the inauguration of pilgrimages and processions, has been complied with to the letter! How happy the most loving heart of our most sweet Mother must feel at the accomplishment of her will!

And you, poor unbelievers, you Catholics in name and not in practice, who, without believing the while, are obstinate in uttering so many falsehoods against the Madonna of Lourdes, do you not blush for shame? Are you not ground to powder beneath the crushing weight of proofs that so clearly demonstrate the certainty of the apparitions, and the continual flow of grace? And you who will not believe, as you say, in these apparitions and miracles under the pretext that God has already worked so many miracles, and that we are a complexity of miracles to ourselves—open your eyes and see. How do you know, vile worms of the earth, whether it is necessary or not, for God to work

new miracles? Necessary, or needless, do you not see the great benefits humanity derives from them? Faith re-inkindled, devotion revived, piety rendered fervent again, religious sentiment awakened and propagated in every heart—and all this in consequence of the miracles of Lourdes;—was it not well then that God worked these miracles, whether we admit, or deny their necessity? Cast one glance on these pilgrims who, from far and near, journey on to Lourdes.

The faithful are prepared for the pilgrimage by prayer and the Sacrament of Penance. As a general rule, before leaving home, the pilgrims hear Mass in a body, and recite the prayers contained in the *itinerary**; and, having ascended the cars, scarce has the locomotive whistled, and the train begun to move, when they intone the Litany of the Blessed Virgin and recite the *Memorare* for the successful issue of the pilgrimage; and, after the example of our Holy Father, Pius IX., when he entered the diligence, chaunt the *De profundis* to recommend the journey to the holy souls in purgatory. Along the way then, except during the stoppings at the various stations, they pray or sing hymns almost continually. What a magnificent and consoling spectacle! While the electric wires and the machinery of the engine, and the coal, water, and fire are all ministering to the pilgrims, they are also ministering to God;

* A magnificent collection of prayers found in the end of the Roman Breviary. Such of the faithful as cannot avail themselves of this, can, when commencing their journey, devoutly make the sign of the cross, recite the *Benedictus*, if they know it, or five *Paters Aves* and *Glorias*, and the *Angelus*, in order to obtain the blessing of a safe journey. It would be better still, if they could recite these prayers in church before departing. Our fathers used to do so—and matters went well with them.

and those courageous Christians, with the cross upon their breasts, like new Crusaders, go forth to combat indifferentism, naturalism, and modern egotism, arrayed as they are in the double armor of prayer and good example. O you railroad employees! O you indolent Christians! who see these new apostles pass by, why do you not reflect even once? They tell you that the Madonna is still your mother, * * * that she will interest herself in your behalf if, like them, you put your hand to your breast, and reflect that you have got an immortal soul, * * * that there is a God, indignant, perhaps, with you on account of so many profanations of His feasts, but still inviting you to penance, * * * that there is an eternity awaiting you. * * * Profit by these spiritual lessons.

Having arrived in Lourdes, they arrange themselves in line of procession, display their crosses, unfurl their banners and standards, and, saluted by the parish bells that peal forth their festive notes, cross the city and, singing canticles, proceed to the holy Grotto. Having reached the crossing of the two roads, one of which slopes down to the Grotto, and the other leads up to the Basilica, which also salutes them with the pealing of its bells, and having received a warm reception from the Missionaries of the Immaculate Conception, the guardians of the sanctuary, they enter the church, hear Mass, receive Holy Communion, and then descend into the Grotto to drink of the miraculous water. Towards evening they assemble again at the Grotto, and after having prayed and heard a short exhortation from some pious priest, make a torch-light procession, perhaps the only one of the kind in the world. The procession advances from the Grotto

along the pathway that creeps, in a serpentine manner, up the mountain slopes, and leads to the sanctuary. It is composed of women, men, priests and bishops, each bearing in hand a long candle of purest wax, protected on top by a sort of paper funnel, on which is painted a picture of the Grotto, or the words: "Long live Pius IX," Now you can find nothing more beautiful than these nocturnal processions. When the night has already spread its dark mantle over the earth; when the stars of heaven, by their sparklings, are proclaiming the glory of God and of Mary, and are representing to human thought the thousand hearts that beat with love for them in heaven and on earth, these fervent Christians, who sing the praises of Mary as they advance along these pathways now lit up by a thousand flambeaus, which gracefully reproduce, amid the darkness, the initials of her most holy name, display the crowns and garlands, and ensigns they carry in her honor. What an enchanting sight! What a consolation to the heart that is truly devoted to Mary!

O you Atheists—at least you who are such in name;—you rationalists, indifferentists, sceptics, unbelievers of every denomination, why do you not go to witness these spectacles, which would do you so much good! How do you explain all this transport and enthusiasm amongst the faithful? Who pays them?—who compensates them for the great fatigues of the pilgrimage, undergone amid so many insults heaped upon them by you, and for the nights they pass in railway cars in watching and prayer? Every effect has its proportionate cause. What cause do you assign capable of producing so continuous and wide-spread a good? Ah! turn you, too, to the Madonna of Lourdes, and ponder

over this stanza of one of our Italian poets :

Deh ! alfin nosco invocate il suo gran nome,
 Salve, dicendo, o degli afflitti scampo,
 Inclita come il sol, terribil come.
 Oste schierata in campo.

“Ah ! call upon her great name even now, saying to her : ‘ Hail, comfort of the afflicted, glorious as the sun, terrible as an army drawn up in battle line.’ ”

MEDITATION ON THE PUBLIC WORSHIP OF MARY.

I.—Consider how much Mary *is pleased when public worship* is rendered her. At Lourdes she herself expressly demanded it through her innocent daughter, Bernadette ; and during the fortnight, as the little girl related, Mary fixed her eyes upon the multitude assembled at the Grotto, and was very much pleased with them. In a word, Mary is pleased with everything that is good and holy, and, therefore with the public worship tendered her. Do you participate in it ?

II.—Consider the *advantages of the public worship of Mary*. They are good example, mutual edification, and consequently, the renewal of all the Christian virtues, and the putting to flight that cursed human respect, which draws so many souls into a neglect of duty, the omission of good works, and, therefore, finally into perdition. Reflect particularly upon this point, * * * How does your conscience feel with regard to human respect ?

III.—Consider *the consequence* of this,—namely, that you, too, should become animated with the desire of taking part in the public worship of Mary, and should, when possible, be present at the pilgrimages and pro-

cessions, which are inaugurated in her honor. You should frequent the churches in which her feasts are celebrated, become associated with the Societies whose object is to promote her glory, etc., thereby to trample down human respect, than which there is nothing more vile and debasing, more hurtful and pernicious to your spiritual welfare.

Practice.—Go publicly to hear a Mass, or a sermon, in honor of Mary.

Ejaculation—*Non erubescio Evangelium.*—O Immaculate Mary of Lourdes, assist me to overcome human respect in matters of religion.

CHAPTER IX.

To Pray for Sinners and To Do Penance.

“To-day if you shall hear His voice, harden not your hearts.”—Pslm. xciv., 8.

The third desire manifested by the Immaculate Virgin at Lourdes, is an invitation to pray for sinners and for the world so much agitated, and to do penance. On the 21st of February, the first Sunday of Lent, in the sixth apparition, the Blessed Virgin turned her eyes around the world, and then fixed them dolorously on Bernadette. * * * “Why are you so sad?” asked the innocent little girl; “What do you desire to be done?” * * * “I wish prayers to be offered up for poor sinners, for this world so much agitated,” replied the Immaculate Virgin. And on Wednesday, the 24th of February, in the eighth apparition, she made the little girl drag herself along on her knees, exclaiming: “Penance! Penance! Penance!” And on the following day she ordered her to eat a little of the grass that was growing at the foot of the Rock.

By these acts—the grief she manifested, and the words she spoke, the tender Mother of the human race is recognised—she who twelve years previously had shed so many tears for sinners at Salette. * * * Sweet Mary! What a loving heart! What concern for her children! What anxiety to ward off the strokes of chastisement they deserve for their sins!

Could this tender desire of hers be forgotten? Nay, it was this very desire that gave origin to the prayers that are continually poured forth in the Grotto and in the Sanctuary. For eighteen years the immense multitudes that assemble at Lourdes, after having offered, by way of penance, the troubles and trials of their long journey, and their privations of every kind, have received the Sacraments, heard Mass, and prayed continually in the Grotto and Basilica. The Masses commence at midnight, and are almost always in course of celebration up to noon. Crowds of persons are always in attendance. The hours from noon till midnight are employed in the recitation of the Rosary, in chanting litanies, the *Magnificat*, the *Ave Maris Stella*, the *Ave Maria*, and hymns—especially the one recording the history of the apparitions. The pilgrims go by turn to the Grotto, and prayers continually ascend to heaven from a thousand lips: priests, laymen and women on the esplanade, along the sloping banks of the Gave facing the Grotto, discharge the office of the Angels; an everlasting canticle of praise is sung day and night to the Mother, the Refuge of Sinners.

And with what unction are prayers recited there! To look upon that statue, to think of the desire manifested by the common Mother of the faithful, to pray for sinners—this is sufficient to chase away distractions from the mind, and absorb it in heavenly contemplation. We must needs judge so from the tears that flow in abundance from the eyes of all; from the exclamations that burst from the lips

of the multitudes, incapable of containing the immense grief and love that fill their hearts. * * * Oh! sacred Grotto of Lourdes! Who can forget the moments passed within thy hallowed precincts! Who can forget the nights especially when, as the midnight hour adds its solemn stillness to the awful impressiveness the place inspires, the singing ceases, and the Masses begin! In that silent hour the sacred and propitiatory Host is immolated to the justice of God, and His mercy is invoked. The Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world, is offered to the Father to call down His blessings, and to obtain peace. Whilst the earth is yet wrapped up in darkness, the human heart is softened; the sinner enters into himself, and weeps. He cannot explain the reason; but yet, he weeps beyond measure, and (strange coincident) his tears are sweet and delicious. * * * He weeps for his own sins, and the scandals he has given. * * * He weeps for the sins and scandals of his parents, friends, acquaintances, and of those, too, he knows not of. * * * He weeps for all sinners who have saddened the heart, and brought tears from the eyes of the most beautiful of all creatures, the most tender of all mothers, the most amiable of all queens. * * * And amid the blaze of three hundred torch-lights, which continually burn at the feet of the statue of the Immaculate Conception, he lifts up his eyes to her whom it represents, and remembers that eighteen years ago she appeared in that niche with sorrow depicted in her countenance—a sorrow so deep, so touching, as to bring floods of tears to the eyes of innocent Bernadette. * * * “Oh! Mother! Oh! good and tender Mother!” he exclaims, with a heart bursting with emotion. What condescension! You have been pleased to come down from heaven to make us understand how much you are grieved by our sins. And we, ungrateful, cruel wretches, are the cause of your dolours. * * * So wicked are we that we cause you to suffer even now. * * *

Ah! your grief made that innocent dove weep, as she witnessed it. * * * I, alone, have a heart of flint; I, who have sinned in boyhood, have become worse in manhood, and even now feel my conscience weighed down by the enormity of my crimes. * * * Oh! pardon me, tender and compassionate Mother! Pardon for me, pardon for my parents, friends, acquaintances, and for every one. Grace, O Queen of Heaven, grace from Jesus—that Jesus, who, for love of us, and for our sins, is offered to the Father. * * * I will go to confession. I will confess all the sins of my whole life with sincerity and hearty contrition. I will amend my life, and cause others, by my good example, to do likewise. * * * I will now console you as much as I have previously offended you. * * * Pardon!!!

And soon the examen of conscience is commenced, which is an easy matter; and if it be a man, he whispers one of the Missionaries, who are always in attendance at the Grotto, and with him retires into some corner, kneels down, and makes his confession. If it be a woman, she goes up to the Sanctuary, and as soon as she can, approaches one of the confessionals, and having confessed, prepares, at least when it is possible, to receive Holy Communion in the Grotto, under the eyes of Mary. * * * My God! What delight! Who shall give Thee to me, my brother Jesus, imbibing my mother's milk, that I may find Thee, and embrace Thee? *Quis mihi det te?* And having received Him on his tongue, and into his breast in the Holy Communion, he retires with Jesus in his heart, and embraces Him in the company of Mary. * * * Jesus and Mary are with him. * * * Let us respect this hour of heavenly benediction. I conjure you, O daughters of Jerusalem, that you disturb not, or awake that happy soul in union with God, until she herself wishes. *Adjuro vos, etc.*

And, indeed, this soul enjoys its God in the embraces of Mary, and long and delicious is its enjoyment. * * * And

when he opens his eyes, and lets fall his arms that were crossed upon his breast, his tongue lisps a fervent prayer. He prays for himself that he may obtain the grace of perseverance in goodness; he prays for all. And now, happy soul, return to thy home; and if carnal inclinations and the force of habit try to detach thee from God, and from the Madonna of Lourdes, it will be only a momentary ordeal: only turn your mind and heart to Mary, and she will free you from your temptations immediately and for ever.

To corroborate this we extract the following fact from the *Semaine Religieuse de Tours* :—

“An old sinner, one of those grown callous in sin,” writes the Rev. Father Maria Antonio,” had come from afar to visit the Madonna of Lourdes, urged thereto by mere curiosity. He met me in the crypt of the Basilica, and in the act of offering me some money, said : ‘ Rev. Father, a townsman of mine, knowing that on my journey I would have to pass through Lourdes, commissioned me to get a Mass celebrated in this Basilica. Here is the money he has given me.’

“Money, I replied, money? I do not need any; nor do I look for it; rather am I anxious about your soul. Have you been to confession?”

“‘No, Father; nay, I have even forewarned the person who has commissioned me to get the Mass celebrated, that he need not expect to learn of my having gone to confession. And you, without knowing the least thing about me, speak to me of confession. Do you know there is something strange in this?’

“No, my friend, there is nothing strange in my words. What would be really strange is that you would come to this holy place with grievous sins upon your soul, and go back burdened as you have come. Oh! you do not know the power and the goodness of the Madonna of Lourdes. Have you been to the Grotto to pray?”

“ ‘No, Father, I have only just arrived ?’

“ ‘Well, my friend, allow me to accompany you to that holy cave, and there pray with you.

“ ‘Willingly, father.’

“ ‘We descended together. The passage between the Grotto and the Gave was full of pilgrims. I said to my companion : ‘Here you will scarcely be able to see the Madonna. Let us enter the Grotto.’ I had the key. I opened the door, and we entered.

“ ‘Father, what are we going to do ?’

“ ‘We must begin to pray to the Madonna.’

“ ‘Ah! father, what say you? I have not prayed in fifty years.’

“ ‘One reason more to urge you not to lose a moment. Let us commence this very instant.’

“ ‘I fell upon my knees, and my companion, docile as a lamb, knelt with me. And that man, who had not prayed in half a century, seemed to me to assume a most fervent, prayerful attitude. At last I said to him : ‘My good friend, when prayers are offered up to the Virgin in the manner you offer them, she cannot refuse anything. Do you know what she desires of you?’

“ ‘Yes, father, too well I know it ; and for a long time has she been asking it of me. But can a sinner like me, so old, so wicked, receive pardon—obtain mercy? A whole year would not suffice to prepare me for confession.’

“ ‘Why do you speak so, my brother? In the presence of Mary Immaculate, you can prepare yourself quicker than you imagine.’

“ ‘I took him by the hand and conducted him behind the altar of the Grotto. He fell on his knees and made his confession. What took place in the soul of that poor sinner, God only knows; and Mary and the angels have witnessed it. His tears and the joyful tones of his voice after confession evidenced it sufficiently to the pilgrims.’”

Behold the fulfillment of the third desire manifested by Mary at the Grotto of Lourdes—namely, to pray for sinners and to do penance.

My dear reader, allow me your confidence, if you please. We are brothers, because we are both children of Mary. I have been in that holy Grotto, and I have seen and felt; and I assure you I shall never forget the holy sentiments it awakened within me. And, my dear brother, how do you feel in conscience? Has not, perchance, our Immaculate Mother been calling you a long time to penance by making a good general confession, or at least to a life more humble, more chaste, more detached from the persons and the things of earth? Listen to me, my dear brother, take my advice: if you go to Lourdes, to the holy Grotto, your Mother will speak to your heart, and she will work there great things in you. But if you cannot go there because of the distance, in the privacy of your room, or in a church, prostrate yourself before an image of Mary, fix your eyes upon it lovingly and long, enter into yourself, and examine your conscience. . . . To-day, Mary invites you by the mouth of a sinner such as I am, to harden your heart no longer. * * * Harken to the words Mary speaks to your heart, and you shall be happy. But, oh! recur to her with confidence. Hesitate not in attending to her invitation, and may God assist you.

Dear reader, scan this present chapter attentively over again, and it will serve you for a meditation.

Practice.—Make a general confession of your sins, if your father confessor allow you.

Ejaculation.—*Refugium peccatorum ora pro nobis.* Immaculate Virgin of Lourdes, you who are the refuge of sinners, pray for us.

CHAPTER X.

*A palpable proof of the Truth of the Apparitions of Lourdes ;
or Mr. Henry Lasserre.*

“Come to me, all you that labor, and are burdened, and I will refresh you.”—Math. xi., 28.

We are living in what is called an age of light—the truth or falsity of which it is not our purpose to discuss here;—but it is a fact that in this, our day, each one wishes to judge and dispute every question—too often without the necessary provision of scientific cognitions, which would render the disputation interesting, or, at least, agreeable, and free, to some extent, the judgment arrived at from the imputation of rashness. Now, all have not been, nor are they at present able to touch with their hands the truth of the proofs we have recorded. In order to accomplish this, it would be necessary to enter into a train of reasoning—a process which this age of ours little loves. Nevertheless, with regard to the facts of Lourdes, Providence has been pleased to put within the reach of all two proofs, which even now they can test, to the end that all may be able to judge of the truth of the apparitions, and cast themselves at the feet of the Immaculate Virgin Mary. The first is the cure of Mr. Lasserre, which we will relate in this chapter.

“During my whole life,” writes Mr. Henry Lasserre, “I had been blessed with excellent sight. I could distinguish objects at an immense distance, and read a book rapidly when at proper range from my eyes. Entire nights passed in study did not fatigue them in the least. I had wondered myself at their endurance. Judge then my surprise, and the cruel anguish I experienced, when, in the months of June and July, 1862, I felt my sight gradually becoming weak, thereby rendering night-work intolerable, and refusing, little by little, to be of any service to me, so that I had been necessitated to give up reading and writing altogether! If I attempted

to take up a book, the reading of three or four lines, sometimes the very first glance, so fatigued my eyes that it was absolutely impossible for me to proceed. I consulted many physicians, and especially two distinguished oculists—namely, M. Desmares and M. Giraud-leulon.” And he goes on to say that the remedies they prescribed—and they were many and powerful, did him very little good; while the disease began insensibly to assume the chronic character of incurable maladies. Hence it was that he left Paris and retired to the country, availing himself of the services of a young secretary, who used to read to him what he desired, and write according to his dictation. About the beginning of September, he got him to write a letter to an intimate friend of his, a Protestant, and whose wife was also of that persuasion. This gentleman replied on the 15th inst., telling him that when passing through Lourdes he had visited the Grotto, and had heard of such wonderful cures effected by the water of the fountain that, had he been a Catholic, he would not have hesitated to give it a trial. He concluded by exhorting Lasserre to try the experiment, even if it were only to please him; because, if ever cured, this would be a most important fact for him as a Protestant;—so much the more readily ought he comply as it was sufficient to write to the Curè of Lourdes, who would send him some of the water. * * * Mr. Lasserre replied to him in the negative. In the beginning of October, on his way to Paris, he called upon his friend and lady. Although Protestants—we repeat it—they said so much that they finally prevailed upon him to write. His friend acted as his amanuensis, and wrote for him to the Curè of Lourdes. Next morning (singular enough for a Protestant, and worth recording), he exhorted him to go to confession before receiving the water, and to put himself in that state prescribed by the Catholic religion, in order to obtain the grace of God. Every day his friend inquired about the reply to the letter, which

finally arrived, informing him that the water had been given in charge to the railroad company, and that he would receive it soon.

The water arrived on the evening of the 10th of October. Mr. Lasserre went to approach the tribunal of penance; but the confessor was engaged. He went home troubled, and, after some hesitation, got the water ready, and on his knees made the following prayer :

“ Yes, my God, I am a miserable sinner, unworthy to lift up my voice to Thee, and to touch anything Thou hast blessed; but this very excess of my misery ought to excite Thy compassion. My God, I come to Thee and to the Holy Virgin Mary, full of faith and self-abandonment, and from the depths of the abyss of my wretchedness raise up my cries to Thee. This evening I will confess my sins to Thy minister, but my faith cannot and will not wait. Pardon me, O Lord, and heal me. And Mother of Mercy, come thou to the aid of thy sinful son.” Then he took a napkin, wet a corner of it in the water of Lourdes, and kneeling down once more, exclaimed in a loud voice: “ O, Holy Virgin Mary, have pity on me and cure my physical and moral blindness.” Having spoken these words, with a heart full of confidence, he rubbed his eyes and face with the napkin moistened in the water of the sacred fountain.

“ This act,” he continues, “ did not occupy thirty seconds. Judge of my amazement, I had almost said, my fear. Scarce had I touched my eyes and face with the water, than I felt cured instantly and without transition—with an instantaneity which, in my feeble language, I can assimilate only to the quickness of lightning.” He could scarcely believe his senses, but he was cured indeed, and was able to read one hundred and four pages of the account of the apparitions of the Holy Virgin of Lourdes, which the Curè had sent him along with the bottle of water. He went to confession, and spoke to his confessor about the occurrence that very even-

ing; and on the following morning received Holy Communion. He afterwards went to see his Protestant friends, who had so providentially contributed to the working of the miracle. They were astonished; * * and God had finished His work. From that time his eyes troubled him no more, and his sight is to day as excellent as it was at first. He finishes his narrative in these words: "O God, grant me grace not to use my eyes in future, except to do good, and to promote Thy glory."

God heard his prayer. In gratitude he promised to write the history of the events which gave rise to the pilgrimages to Lourdes, and went to work immediately. Being a man of wonderful genius, rare erudition, and iron will, and an exceedingly scrupulous historian, before taking up his pen, he was determined to see everything, and feel with his hand. Wherefore, he traveled much through France in order to question the witnesses of the facts he records. He searched the municipal archives of Lourdes, and as many others as he could; and finally, after seven years' labor, published his incomparable history, entitled: *Notre Dame de Lourdes, par Henri Lasserre*. He sent a copy to Pope Pius IX., who wrote him a magnificent Brief on the 4th of September, 1869. The book has been translated into all the modern languages. The edition of which we avail ourselves, bears the date 1876: it is the 86th French edition.

In the year 1873, he divided his book into thirty-one lectures for the month of Mary, and in the introduction earnestly invites those who may be the recipients of any miraculous favor at the hands of Our Lady of Lourdes, to notify him of it by mail. He gives his address: Henry Lasserre, a Coux près Siorac, (Dordogne), France. His is an ardent love; and he is at present preparing a sequel to his history. He even gives the address of the parties he records, for the benefit of those who may feel inclined to test the truth of his account. The words of the proverb are

applicable here: *Let him who does not wish to believe, go and see, or who does not believe, let him see*: a very easy thing to accomplish by writing to the persons mentioned. It is true there is no longer an opposition party of good faith; Mr. Lasserre has, by his book, closed the mouths of all because, as an independent and learned Catholic journalist has said, his investigations produce the highest grade of credibility; nay, more; no one can even pretend to demonstrate the truth of a fact. But yet, there are always Voltaires and opposers of the bad faith class who believe not because they do not wish. Well, if the mouths of this latter class have not been closed, which would be impossible, at least, the mask has been taken from their faces by another distinguished person, as we shall record in the following chapter.

And now, dear reader, while you consider how M. Henry Lasserre, having made his sacramental confession, prepared himself on the evening of the 10th of October, 1862, to receive Holy Communion on the following morning, enter into yourself and make the following

MEDITATION ON PREPARATION FOR HOLY COMMUNION.

I. Consider how, in order to make this preparation, you must call to mind *the infinite perfection of that God*, whom we receive in Holy Communion. He is infinitely great, * * * holy, * * * just, * * * powerful. Oh! what a preparation we should make for Communion, in which we are to receive Him!

II. Consider how we should call to mind *our own wretchedness*. We are sinners—miserable in every respect. Our minds are engaged by the vanities of the world, and our hearts are wrapped up in the love of creatures. We are completely needy, and God can and will assist us in the Holy Communion. How necessary, then, is it for us to prepare ourselves diligently, before we approach Him in this Sacrament! * * * Do you make such a preparation?

III. Consider *the manner* in which this preparation is to be made—namely, to excite within us faith—hope—charity—contrition for our sins—humility—the desire to receive God, and to have recourse to the intercession of the Virgin Mary, St Joseph, our Angel Guardians and Patron Saints. My dear reader, do you prepare yourself thus to make your Communions?

Practice.—Make to-day acts of faith, hope, charity and contrition, by way of preparation for Communion.

Ejaculation.—Sweet heart of my Jesus, grant that I may love Thee ever more. Sweet heart of Mary, be thou my protection.

CHAPTER XI.

Ten Thousand Livres to Gain.

“In all things you are made rich.”—1. Cor., 1. 5.

The Sovereign Pontiff, Pius IX., in his brief to Henry Lasserre so often mentioned, predicted that his book would be in the hands of the Most Holy Virgin an instrument, by means of which she would arouse men’s devotion to, and confidence in her, in order that all might participate in the fullness of her graces. This prediction of the Vicar of Jesus Christ upon earth, has produced its effect. One proof out of a thousand, is the following :

In the month of June 1871, a young girl of fourteen years of age, named Juliette Fournier, was on the point of death by reason of a complication of diseases under which she had been laboring for many months, and which had baffled every remedy. Her uncle, Mr. Emilius Artus d’Alencon, having become enraptured with Lasserre’s book, which he read through with avidity in one night, recommended the water of Lourdes. She drank of it, bathed her enfeebled

limbs with it, and was cured instantly and completely. On account of this miracle her father and her elder brother—both professed skeptics, returned to God, as happened in hundreds of other cases. Mr. Artus, having paid his grateful acknowledgments to the Madonna of Lourdes by making a pilgrimage in company with his family to the holy Grotto, believed it to be his sacred duty to bear public testimony to the truth of the miracle, and spread the knowledge of it amongst the people. He accordingly wrote a brief account of it to the *Univers*, a Catholic journal; and it appeared in its pages on the 28th, of June, 1871. It was copied by all the other religious journals, and was soon well known to every body. The skeptics, as was their custom, began to ridicule the cure obtained, as they said, *by the use of fresh water*, and did not at all examine the fact by calling to see the girl who had been restored to health, or by consulting the doctors who had attended her, or interrogating the witnesses. Mr. Artus reflected upon this mode of proceeding followed by the skeptics, and his heart was grieved to think that so many readers, though the medium of the irreligious press, blindly believe their words, and imagine their assertions well founded, or at least uttered in good faith. Wherefore, he resolved to unmask them, and on the 23d day of July following, he sent a letter to the *Univers*, in which he challenged the Free-thinkers to prove the falsity of the wonders recorded by Henry Lasserre. And in order that the debate might not be too lengthy, he proposed that if they should select two facts he pointed out as a specimen, he would defend them, and wager 10,000 francs on their verity, or a larger sum if they so desired, declaring that in case he should be victorious, he would immediately hand over the amount to some work of charity. He imagined that none of the Free-thinkers would have spoken, but, on the contrary, he had the consolation of receiving a reply from a certain Cazeaux, under the assumed name of V. de Marcadeau di

Cauterets. Artus willingly responded, and more minutely fixed the terms and conditions of the challenge ;—they were these : 1st. To prove the falsity of at least two principal facts related by Lasserre, and by him ranked amongst the miraculous,—and he instanced seven examples: and 2d, to form an honorary tribunal of competent persons, whose honesty was notorious, whose fidelity was above suspicion, and whose decision was beyond appeal ; and that as soon as they had issued it, the notary with whom the money might have been deposited, should remit it immediately to the victor. The judges should be selected from the Institute, and from the most celebrated academies of France, or from amongst the lawyers. But the adversary declined the challenge, heaping all manner of abuse on Artus. This gentleman then published the whole matter in the papers, by means of which it was spread far and near. He renewed the challenge, and deposited with the notary, Turquet, the 10,000 francs, and 5,000 francs more to defray the expenses incurred by the loser. He declared he would leave the money in the notary's hands for two months. He waited nearly a year ; but finding that no one took up the challenge, he published the whole matter in a pamphlet entitled—*Les miracles de N. D. de Lourdes, défi public à la libre pensée. Guérison de Juliette Fournier par E. Artus, Paris Victor Palmè, 1872.* He sent a copy to all the Free-thinkers in France, and had it announced in all the religious journals of Europe. He winds up in these words :

“Since amongst all the witnesses, who have had these facts before their eyes ; since amongst all the philosophers who have shrugged their shoulders with contempt, whenever divine intervention in the case has been mentioned in their presence ; since amongst all the adversaries of the point at issue, not one has been found willing to pick up the gauntlet ; since free-thinking has all at once become mute, and has refused to lay its purse on the table of the judges, all

men of good faith to-day should hold for certain that the supernatural facts, which have transpired at Lourdes in our time and which have been recorded by Mr. Henry Lasserre, are beyond all question ; that the Most Holy Virgin has really appeared at Lourdes ; that at her word and beck divine, a fountain gushed forth beneath the hand of Bernadette, and that ever since miraculous cures, whose certainty is confirmed by their very adversaries who dare not now dispute them, have continued to testify to every one who wishes to open his eyes and see the truth of Christianity, and the omnipotence of the God-Man whom we adore upon our altars. * * * And it is also demonstrated beyond all shadow of doubt that these Free-thinkers, when in their books, journals and speeches they deny and attack the miraculous, Catholicity, Jesus Christ, feign a certainty they feel not either in their conscience, mind, or heart. It is demonstrated that while they boldly pledge their word and honor as publicists and writers regarding these religious questions, and in their treatment of them hesitate not to trifle with the souls of the people and with the foundation of society, they dare not, with all their pretended certainty, although publicly challenged, venture a contest, nor a single dollar. This fact alone decides their position, and gives us the true measure of their good faith and worth."

Having seen that no Free-thinker would accept his challenge, Mr. Artus withdrew his money, but put in press two other little works—*The Doctors and the Miracles of Lourdes*, and *The Miracles of Lourdes and the Press*—in which he answers those who, not daring to accept his challenge, still dispute the miracles ; and states that he is ever ready to make a new deposit and repeat the challenge. Wherefore, you who question the facts of Lourdes, do you believe you are right? Advance, then. Accept the challenge. Write to Mr. Artus, in Paris, informing him of your readiness to enter the lists, and beside the honor you may win by the

contest, you will also gain ten thousand francs, or more, if you feel disposed to wager it, for he will stake one hundred thousand francs on the issue.

But you dare not accept the challenge ; and why ? * * * Ah ! put your hand to your conscience and call to mind that to impugn the known truth is a sin against the Holy Ghost, as our Lord Jesus Christ says in the Gospel : “ He that shall speak against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, nor in the world to come.” (Math. xii. 32.)

As for us, my dear reader, let us enter into ourselves, and by way of commending these poor, blind skeptics to the Lord, and as an immediate preparation for Holy Communion, let us make the following

MEDITATION ON THE EXCELLENCE OF COMMUNION.

I. Consider *who it is that comes to us in the Holy Communion*. It is Jesus Christ, the Son of God ; and with Him come the Father and the Holy Ghost. * * * The three Persons of the Most Holy Trinity. * * * God. That eternal God. * * * The Creator and Lord of Heaven and earth. * * * That Jesus who, for love of you, was born in a poor stable—lived in a humble cottage by the labor of His hands—passed through this world doing good and healing the sick, wished, by a series of stupendous miracles, to remain with us in the Eucharist, . . . to suffer and to die. That Jesus who rose from the dead, ascended into Heaven, and is to come again to judge us. * * * How excellent is the Holy Communion, in which Jesus comes to us !

II. Consider *who it is to whom God comes*. To man—a heap of rottenness as regards the body, and as regards the soul, only a mere creature . . . to man, who has so many times offended Him by sin . . . to man, so weak and

miserable. * * * What condescension! What love! What goodness!

III. Consider *why* this God comes to man. To be united to him. . . . To keep him in His favor, and increase divine grace in his soul. . . . To reinvigorate him, and give him a taste for heavenly things. . . . To remit his venial sins, and preserve him from mortal. * * * What happiness for the man who knows how to derive profit from the Holy Communion! * * * Surely, as St. Paul says, "In all things you are made rich in Jesus Christ." * * * Do you believe all this? Do you reflect on these truths when you go to Holy Communion? Do you gather these fruits from approaching the Table of the Lord? Why do you not gather them? Correct the defects that sully your soul.

Practice.—In these sentiments make a sacramental Communion.

Ejaculation.—O living bread from Heaven, most august Sacrament! I adore you every instant. Immaculate Virgin Mary of Lourdes, assist me to make my Communion well.

CHAPTER XII.

Long Live the Madonna of Lourdes! Feasts of July, 1876.

"And the people rejoiced exceedingly, and they spent that day with great joy. And he ordained that this day should be kept every year." (1 Mach., vii. 48, 49.)

"A glorious day for the sanctuary of Our Lady of Lourdes—a day exceptionally privileged," wrote the Bishop of Tarbes, in whose diocese Lourdes is situated, in his pastoral of the 19th of March last, announcing the Feasts of the Consecration of the Basilica and the Coronation of the Statue of the Immaculate Conception. And indeed these

festal days, namely, the 2d and the 3d of July, were "glorious days, days exceptionally privileged."

The heavens themselves seemed to add to the beauty of the feasts, for the weather was magnificent. There were present over thirty-five Prelates, amongst whom were numbered the Cardinal Archbishop of Paris, Mons. Joseph Hyppolitus Guibert, the Pope's Nuncio, Mons. Francis Megla, Archbishop of Damascus, ten Archbishops, and twenty-three Bishops, mostly from France—nearly all of whom were able to take part in the ceremonies. The Canons, Pastors and the other Clergymen, secular and regular, numbered over three thousand. Besides, there were present one hundred thousand lay people of both sexes, and of every age, rank and condition from France, Spain, England, and Italy. But let us approach the holy places.

What a grand sight met the pilgrim's eye on the 1st of July, 1876, as he got out at the railway station in Lourdes, and passed through that city with its houses all adorned with festoons of green, and then directing his steps along the way leading to the Grotto, and finally having got outside the city limits, journeyed on amid the countless lines of tents enriched with objects of piety, and onward still across the bridge that spans the Gave, and then turned his eyes to the western horizon.

The sky was clear and beautiful, and from his realms in the azure expanse the sun shed upon the scene the glad-some light of his golden rays. The lofty peaks of the mountains are seen in the distance. On the left the mountain called Calvary raises its head aloft, which is surmounted by a large cross; and further down on the levelled summit of the rock of Massabielle are seen the towering campanile, and the beautiful white sanctuary with its two side staircases leading to the grand gateway, and between them the door of the crypt, and the piazza with its balustrade and staircase in course of construction, which will lead from the

house of the missionaries up to the piazza of the Basilica, and all around and along the sides, and throughout the entire length of the many path-ways lofty polls hung with festoons and ancient French banners, some white and blue, the colors of the Immaculate Virgin—some white and yellow, the colors of the Sovereign Pontiff; and along the way leading to the church, to Calvary, and on the piazza and esplanade are assembled one hundred thousand persons; and towards the right the Gave, which flows on dark and murmuring at the base of the hill, by whose flank rushes the locomotive puffing and whistling; and further down the two magnificent monasteries of the Benedictines and the Carmelites directly facing the holy Grotto—and this whole panorama contemplated in thought. Behold the mountain of the Immaculate: behold the place eighteen times visited by the Virgin Mother of God: behold the site rich with spiritual and corporal wonders, that region of grace and benediction—oh! all this made upon the mind of the pilgrim, an impression so dear, so sweet, so delicious as to imparadise him.

But yet a greater happiness awaits him. Having on his right the platform, on which rises the altar, erected for the coronation of the statue of the Immaculate Virgin—then a round roof, open in the middle, within which are placed tables and benches for the refecton of the pilgrims—after this a white tent, occupying three sides of a great rectangle, within which are erected sixteen altars, called the altars of the Esplanade of the Rosary, while the fourth side, one of the two larger, serves as a Communion rail for the faithful, and on the left a wall, which supports the Missionaries' dwelling, and bears an inscription telling of the ancient course of the mill-stream; then the two neat little cottages, containing separate rooms for supplying the sick of both sexes with the water of the holy fountain, he arrives, at last, at the true theatre of the miracles—the Holy Grotto.

The mill-stream or canal, which used to wash the base of the Rock of Massabielle, was changed, and over it, as far as the Gave, has been constructed a beautiful mosaic pavement, bounded on the bank of the river by a parapet, which being flagged over, serves as a long stone bench to sit upon. A voice speaks to thy heart, saying : "Uncover thy head in reverence, for the ground thou touchest is holy." * * * The pilgrim willingly obeys, and proceeds onward until he arrives at the place which bears a tablet of stone, with this inscription : "Course of the ancient mill-stream;" and two paces further down toward the river, another slab, inscribed: "The place where Bernadette prayed on the 11th of February, 1858." O pilgrim! turn your eyes in a southerly direction, and fix them on the Rock of Massabielle, which now appears before you. The Church applies to Mary the words : "I have selected and sanctified this place that my name may be there, etc.,"—words exactly applicable to this place of benediction. He feels the name, the inspiration of the Immaculate Mother of God. Kneel down and pray, devout pilgrim. Thank the most Holy Virgin for having conducted you thither in safety during your long journeying. Kiss the holy ground, and give free vent to your heart now teeming with a thousand affections. My God, what delight! what joy! what sweet impressions!

But arouse yourself, pious pilgrim. Listen to the merry chime announcing the commencement of the grand solemnity. Be present at these functions, the like of which you shall, perhaps, never see again.

In fact, about five o'clock in the evening of that 1st of July, the feasts commenced. There were two festivities : one was the consecration of the Basilica, which took place on the 2d inst., and the other, the coronation of the statue of the Immaculate Virgin, which was celebrated next day.

ARTICLE. I.

Consecration of the Basilica of Lourdes.

The reader is aware that from the most remote times, the Holy Catholic Church has been accustomed to bless her newly built temples, by the hand of a priest, who recites prayers, and sprinkles the walls of the sacred edifice with holy water. This is called the *Dedication* of the Church; or more simply, its *Benediction*. Such was the ceremony of which the church, or sanctuary of Lourdes, had been previously the recipient. Although, through the benign concession of the Sovereign Pontiff, Pius IX., it had been raised, by virtue of his venerated Brief of the 13th of March, 1874, to the rank of a *minor Basilica*, which means that it was enriched with certain privileges, as the use of particular sacred and distinctive ornaments inside its precincts and out; still it had been only blessed by a priest, and had not been yet consecrated. Beside this simple benediction, the Catholic Church has also the ceremony of *Consecrating* her temples and altars; and this is performed by the Bishop with the unction of holy oil, and is, therefore, called *Consecration*. Such was the ceremony that took place in the Basilica of Lourdes on the 2d of July.

The Sovereign Pontiff had granted extraordinary privileges on this occasion: 1st. That the Cardinal Archbishop of Paris would consecrate the Basilica in the name of His Holiness, and wear the pallium during the Pontifical Mass; 2d. That while His Eminence was consecrating the high altar, fifteen other Archbishops, or Bishops, would consecrate the fifteen minor altars; 3d. That the water, cement, etc., to be used in the consecration of the Church, could be blessed on the vigil; 4th. That the consecrating Cardinal would be assisted in the holy-water sprinklings by two, or four Archbishops, or Bishops, from amongst those who were

to perform the consecration of the minor altars ; 5th. That the Papal benediction would be pronounced, and that the ceremonies would be under the direction of Mons. Cataldi, master of ceremonies to His Holiness. And further that holy Mass could be celebrated from midnight up to one o'clock P.M., and that many plenary indulgences could be obtained.

It was in virtue of these extraordinary privileges that on Saturday, the 1st of July, about five o'clock in the evening, the grand procession of the Bishops, forming in line of march from the Episcopal residence, preceded by twelve young Arabs, who were conspicuous by reason of the whiteness of their national costumes, and defiling through the crowds of pilgrims, advanced towards the Basilica, where they were received by the Bishop and the Clergy of Tarbes. The Cardinal delegate and Papal representative was addressed in a few words of friendly greeting, to which his eminence replied in noble yet simple language, making his thankful acknowledgments for the reception tendered him, and entered the crypt. Then, the Pontifical briefs having been read, each Bishop affixed his seal to the reliquary to be enclosed in the altar about to be consecrated, and the Cardinal blessed the utensils to be employed in the consecration of the Church next day. The relics were then exposed for veneration in the Chapel of the Sacred Heart, one of the seven in the crypt, where the faithful prayed before them during the night.

On the same evening immense crowds, after having heard a touching and solid instruction from Fr. Candeloup, d. C. d. G. explanatory of the grand functions to be performed in the morning, prayed and sang hymns until late at night. At midnight, Masses commenced simultaneously at the holy Grotto, in the crypt, on the church terrace, on the esplanade of the Rosary, and in the Bishops' residences. The number of Masses was forty-five at a time, celebrated on as many altars.

At seven o'clock in the morning, beneath a brilliant sun,

and amid the joyful pealing of the bells, the great procession began to defile out to the Basilica.

The Cross was in the foreground, followed by long lines of priests robed in surplices, and the foreign Canons in choral costume; next followed four priests in red vestments, bearing the throne of the relics; the Canons of Tarbes, in their sacred ornaments; the dignitaries wearing copes; the Archbishops and Bishops who were to consecrate the altars, robed in copes, bearing their pastoral staffs, and mitred, each having two assistants in choral costume, their clerics and standard-bearers. Next came two pontifical mace-bearers; the Archbishops, who were to consecrate the church, with their assistants and clerics; two other pontifical mace-bearers; His Eminence the Cardinal, with his ministers in white dalmatics, followed by his tail-bearer in surplice, and three chaplains in black cassock and mantelette; four standard-bearers in cope; the other Archbishops and Bishops in cope, bearing their pastoral staffs and mitred, and having each two assistants; the Prothonotary Apostolic Prelates, the Private Chamberlains and the Chamberlains of Honor, the Chamberlains of the Cope and Sword (*di cappa e spada*), and the dignitaries of the Pontifical Guards. In a word, this is the Papal Court in its religious magnificence; and the multitude astonished at such unusual pomp, bowed and knelt.

Having entered the church, the door was closed, as is always done during the ceremony of consecration: the only parties admitted to the functions, and that because of their dignity, were the Duke and Duchess of Parma, the Duke of Nemours, and the Duke and Duchess d'Alençon. After the consecration Pontifical Mass was sung by the Archbishop of Auch, the Metropolitan, and at the Gospel, Mons. Mermillod, Bishop of Ginevra, ascended the pulpit, and delivered a magnificent homily on the occasion they had assembled to celebrate.

Meantime, Fr. Candeloup preached upon the banks of the Gave to a very great multitude. Solemn Mass was sung on the altar erected on the platform destined for the Coronation. Excellent music was rendered by the Artillery School of Tarbes, sent by General de Franchessin, who himself assisted at the feasts with many of his officials and a great number of soldiers.

But the hours were passing. It was noon, and a glowing sun was shedding his rays upon the valley. Nevertheless, the people remained recollected. Finally, after six hours' waiting, the long and magnificent cortege of Bishops and Clergy was seen slowly moving from the Basilica. The Prelates arranged themselves in their majesty around the Cardinal, who prepared in the name of the Holy Father to give the Papal Benediction. It was a solemn moment. The valleys and the hills, covered with people, reminded one of the magnificent piazza of St. Peter's at Rome; for with the same faith and enthusiasm as there, did this immense crowd receive the Papal Benediction pronounced by the representative of Pius IX.

Towards five o'clock the great procession of Bishops defiled off towards the esplanade, notwithstanding the scorching heat of the sun's rays. They gathered together on the platform around the altar, and then, after a magnificent discourse by Fr. Roux, a triumphant *Magnificat* was sung by one hundred thousand voices, and then Jesus, reposing in the Sacrament in the midst of the thousand splendors of the Ostensary of the Immaculate Conception, blessed the crowd, the valleys, and the whole horizon.

As the shades of evening began to fall, another great feast commenced, or, to speak more accurately, the same feast was continued in a sweeter and more entrancing form. Father Roux still continued to fire with enthusiasm the thousands of pilgrims by reason of the fervid discourse delivered to them in front of the sacred Grotto—a dis-

course which made the hearts of all throb with love for Mary Immaculate and for the Sovereign Pontiff, as a thousand shouts of applause testified. The canticles and prayers were again commenced.

But a new day dawned with the night upon the happy valley. The Basilica seemed to blaze like the heavenly Jerusalem. Cordons of fire admirably defined the architectural lines of the front of the church. The illuminations, like a current of electricity, soon lit up the entire valley. The Benedictine monastery displayed its illuminated Ostensary, while a star blazed in front of the Carmelite convent. All the public buildings, all the private houses, shone like one great fire throughout the length and breadth of the city of Lourdes.

At the same time fifty thousand pilgrims lit their torches and commenced their countless processions. This stream of stars flowed on from the Grotto, ascended the mountain, encircled the Basilica with a crown of love, descended in majesty towards the esplanade, where it expanded its immense waves like a sea. Meanwhile an ocean of voices chanted the joyful tones of the *Ave Maria*, the supplicatory accents of the *Litany*, and gladsome popular canticles.

Suddenly the detonation of explosives is heard upon the mountain, fiery serpents ascend toward the skies, and curving gracefully over the Basilica, shower down upon it a million stars, that sparkle with all the colors of the rainbow. It seemed as if the heavens had poured out all its splendors upon the consecrated chapel. The Basilica itself is now ablaze. Powerful vari-colored fireworks in succession, shed upon it the sweetest and most enchanting tints, amid which the cordons of the illuminations glistened like precious diamonds. It was the feast of the Basilica—the feast, too, of the Immaculate Conception. The mountain is lit up from base to apex, and upon this new Thabor is read from afar, in huge flaming letters, the inscription :

LONG LIVE OUR LADY OF LOURDES. Globes, azure-colored and white, suspended upon the right and upon the left, cross each other, and form a triumphal arch over Our Lady of Lourdes. And when this enchanting spectacle had been long enough gazed upon with admiration and applause, the mountain boomed like a volcano, and flung into the air a last grand bouquet, in which fires, stars, globes and thunders blended together as the closing glory of this never-to-be-forgotten day.

Nevertheless, the prayers and hymns continued at the Grotto.

ARTICLE II.

The Coronation.

Even amongst the pagans of old it was customary to crown the images and statues of their false divinities with the verdant ivy, branches of laurel, and betimes with precious metals. The Catholic Church has turned this practice to good, and so from the most remote period it has been her wont to place crowns of gold or silver upon sacred images. She has established a solemn rite, to be observed during the ceremony of coronation, which continues unto our own day. However, the coronation of images and statues is now a days commonly confined to those of the Blessed Virgin Mary and of her Divine Son, and the ceremony is performed either immediately by the Sovereign Pontiff, or by the Chapter of St. Peter's on the Vatican, for which purpose, in the year 1637, a considerable legacy was bequeathed by Count Alessandro Sforza di Piacenza, with the obligation of crowning the most renowned images of Most Holy Mary. In either case, the coronation of a statue or image is one of the grandest feasts celebrated by the Catholic Church. The temple has to be adorned for the

festival ; the image to be crowned is, if possible, to be carried in procession beneath a canopy to the high altar ; a solemn Mass is to be celebrated ; discourses suitable to the occasion are to be delivered—in a word, the greatest joy is to be manifested in every possible manner.

The coronation of the statue of the Immaculate Virgin Mary of Lourdes was approved by the Sovereign Pontiff, who, although it was a new concession, vouchsafed to grant permission to Mons. F. Meglia, Archbishop of Damascus, and Nuncio Apostolic at Paris, to perform the august rite in his name, which he did on the 3d of July, in presence of the Cardinal Archbishop of Paris, and of thirty-three Archbishops and Bishops.

On that day, however, at midnight, forty-five Masses commenced simultaneously, and Communion was dispensed in various places. At nine o'clock, the immense multitude filled the valley of the Gave, covered the neighboring slopes, and hung suspended from the summits of the cliffs. The grand procession of Bishops moved majestic from the sanctuary toward the esplanade. There on the grand altar erected on the platform, a solemn pontifical Mass was celebrated by the Apostolic Nuncio in presence of the Cardinal, the Bishops, and the immense multitude. The singing, supported by the sweet harmony of the band of Lourdes, issued from a thousand lips and a thousand hearts ; and this vast assemblage remained five hours after in recollection and prayer. It is stated that about fifty strangers came from a manufacturing city for the purpose of hissing. Let it be ours to believe that each one found at Lourdes a fountain of salutary tears.

After the Gospel, Mons. Pie, Bishop of Poitiers, ascended the pulpit, and in a magnificent homily, portrayed the glories of Our Lady of Lourdes, peremptorily confirmed the apparitions, and demonstrated their wonderful fecundity in spiritual blessings. It may be said that this was

the last word uttered on the glorious history of Our Lady of Lourdes. Light has shone out; denial is no longer possible, for Hilary, the oracle of France, has spoken.

But the solemn moment has arrived. At the termination of the Pontifical Mass, the crown was carried into the midst of the assembly of Bishops. The Apostolic Nuncio, delegated by the Holy Father, blessed in the name of His Holiness, this new diadem, destined to adorn the brow of the Immaculate Virgin. Then he slowly ascended the long flight of stairs leading to the gilded niche above the altar, in which smiled a sweet image of Our Lady of Lourdes. In deep emotion the Prelate approached and placed the blessed diadem on the head of the Queen of Heaven. After a moment of ineffable silence, the hearts of the multitudes burst suddenly into tears, which were followed by exclamations, rounds of applause, and hymns of triumph, the *Regina cæli lætare allelujah*, etc. The weeping, shouting and applause again commenced, and more than once did they drown in echoes the hymns and the flourish of trumpets, while the Bishops came in turn to offer incense to the crowned Queen. The Mons. Bishop of Tarbes then thanked the princes of the Church, who had come to render the celebrations more imposing by their august presence. The Apostolic Nuncio gave the Papal Benediction, and the procession defiled off to the sanctuary, where he also crowned the statue reposing on the high altar above the tabernacle, in which dwells He who eternally crowns His Mother amid the splendors of the saints. The immense crowd followed the Bishops to the Episcopal residence, where for the last time they received their solemn benedictions.

All was finished, but yet it may be stated that a new feast had commenced, the grand Octave, which was preached upon the esplanade by Father Hubin. On Monday evening, the immense torch-light processions were again resumed; their line of march was around the Basilica, which

was again illuminated. All was not finished. Nay, it seems that a new era had commenced for the Madonna of Lourdes, now better known and better loved; now, more than ever, the Queen and the Mother of Hearts. What springs from Heaven and love knows no end; and that devotion, which has inspired the institution of these grand festivals, shall be for ever crowned and consecrated in the glorious Basilica of the Eternal Love.

ARTICLE III.

The Crown and the Ostensary of the Immaculate Conception of Lourdes. The Collision at Ygos. The Golden Palm sent by the Holy Father, Pius IX.

We cannot terminate this chapter without speaking of some of the circumstances that attended and followed the solemn coronation of the statue of the Immaculate Virgin Mary of Lourdes.

We have already said that there were present 35 Bishops, 3,000 Priests, and 100,000 of the laity, amongst whom were the Duke and Duchess of Parma, the Duke of Nemours and daughter, the Princess Bianca d'Orleans, the Duke and Duchess d'Alençon, and a nephew of Garcia Moreno, the lamented President of the Republic of Ecuador. Twelve hundred hosts had been prepared for the celebration of the Masses, and one hundred thousand particles for the Communion of the faithful, which, having been all consumed, it was calculated that there were a great many more of the laity present on that day.

The crown offered to Mary by the piety of the faithful is of pure gold set with diamonds. From the circle, formed like a garland of roses, shoot up mystic lillies studded with stars. This is the work of the brothers Mellerio, most renowned Piedmontese jewelers living in Paris.

But the *chef-d'œuvre* offered to the Madonna of Lourdes by the generosity of one pilgrim, whose name we are sorry we cannot give, and which shall remain a lasting monument of this feast, is the celebrated Ostensary, the work of M. Armand Calliat de Lyon. It would be a futile effort to endeavor to describe it, as all who have seen it unanimously assert. To form an idea of its magnificence we must call to mind that on it are sixty-three figures in bass-relief, four eagles and sixteen columns, the statues of the Holy Virgin and St. Joseph, and thirty-two medallions, and on the back of the lunette a hundred figures chiseled, or enameled. It is bedecked with over one thousand diamonds, fourteen hundred precious stones, topazes, rubies, amethysts, etc., twenty-two stars of brilliants surrounding the Gloria, twelve other stars of small brilliants, which form the aureola of the Virgin, and thirty-two sparkling lilies in the corona of the Rosary accompanying it. In fine, above the Ostensary is a figure of the holy Grotto of Massabielle with a statue of the Virgin which stands out conspicuous upon a base of topazes in low relief, of a pale pink color. Suffice it to say that M. Calliat had engaged upon it thirty-six of his best mechanics for more than four years.

This Ostensary was used for the first time at the feast of the coronation.

Special and extraordinary graces were not wanting in those days. One of the principal is the visible protection of heaven accorded to the pilgrimage of Niort at the time of the terrible collision of the trains near the city of Ygos.

Niort is a city of over twenty thousand inhabitants, and the capital of the department called *des deux Sevres*. Over seven hundred of its inhabitants started on Saturday night in order to reach Lourdes on Sunday, the 2d of July. Having passed the station of Morcenx, they were approaching Ygos, when at half-past one after midnight the collision, of which we speak, occurred. But let us hear the fact as described by Father Briant, director of the pilgrimage.

“To the joyful sound of hymns and prayers, which had, during the day, changed our carriages into so many moving oratories, succeeded the calm and the recollection of night, and the seven hundred pilgrims from Niort were endeavoring by repose to prepare themselves for future fatigue. Our cars had to stop at the Ygos station in order to let the express train of Mont-de-Marsan pass, which at that moment was rushing full steam from the other side of the station upon Morcenx.

We had passed the curve described by the rails at the entrance to Ygos, and had just arrived at the first signal light, which was extinguished. Surprised at this negligence of the station master, the engineer and conductor commenced to communicate their fears to each other, when suddenly, at five hundred metres distant, they descried the express train in front of them, which the curve had up to this hidden from their view, and which was bearing down upon them with a velocity of sixty kilometres an hour. What was to be done? The danger was imminent, and the collision inevitable: the risk could not be avoided: nothing could be done except to lessen the effects of the terrible catastrophe. With a coolness and presence of mind above all eulogy as well as recompense, the engineer, at a glance, took in the situation. To stop his progress, put on the breaks, and let off all his steam in lusty echoes in order to impress upon the down train a retrograde movement—all this was done with the rapidity of thought; meantime, the conductor leaped upon the track and ran, lantern in hand, towards the express train to warn the engineer of the impending danger; but by some fatal circumstance these signals were not perceived, because the engineer and fireman were at that moment attending to the furnace, and consequently saw and understood nothing. In a moment our carriages receive a tremendous shock; the two engines had struck. From all the compartments, a shout of horror

echoes simultaneously through the gloom. Two other shocks still more terrible, follow. The carriages creak, and are well-nigh shattered; the lights go out; the pilgrims are hurled one upon the other; the shadow of death reigns supreme over this scene of horror.

“Soon silence was established—but it was the silence of anguish and despair.

“‘What has happened?’ is asked all around.

“‘A collision; but all is over and we are safe.’

“‘Is it so? But there must have been serious mishaps—some persons must have been killed.’

“‘With what anxiety and terror they wait for the news! Soon consoling tidings pass through the various carriages like a lamp of joy. The feelings of emotion with which all hearts had been oppressed are now calmed: the conductor had rushed about, and having ascertained the results returned, harbinger of gladness, to tranquilize his passengers.

“Not a single person had been seriously injured!

“Each person alights from his carriage, wishing to see for himself the true state of things. What a spectacle presents itself to their gaze! The front of the locomotive is very much damaged; the pistons are broken in pieces, but the fireman and engine driver have not suffered a contusion; the controller who was in the wagon, had been hurled from one extremity to the other, but the only injury he sustained was a slight pain in the knee. The first-class carriage, which was behind the magazine wagon, was completely wrecked; by the violence of the shock the two seats in the first compartment were forced into close proximity, and the eight pilgrims within should have had their limbs crushed. Nothing of the kind! Not even a scratch! Throughout the rest of the train four persons only, among whom was Father Briant, director of the pilgrimage, had suffered slight contusions of the face.

“The miracle was evident to all, and a fervent prayer was thankfully poured forth from every heart.”

“Soon the director of the southern train arrived at Ygos, and congratulating us asserted that only a miracle could have saved us.” Despite the energy and prudence of our engineer, ‘said he,’ we should have had many victims in that unfortunate collision ; and had it occurred *two minutes previously* in the middle of the curve described by the track, where there was a heap of stones, the catastrophe would have been lamentable ?

“On our return the commissary of one of the principal southern stations said to the director of the pilgrimage : ‘I congratulate you on your having escaped such a serious calamity ; since the invention of the locomotive, a similar escape has not been known, nor it is possible to have a repetition of it under the same circumstances. You should have been all crushed to pieces ! * * * Ah ! you speak much about the miracles of Lourdes—well ! believe me there never has been a miracle so astounding as this ; and the protection accorded you the other night, is for me the most *certain* of all the miracles.’”

How the Immaculate Virgin of Lourdes protects her children and devoted pilgrims !

Besides this, many other extraordinary favors were bestowed in these days. As for example the following :—Maria Colle, of Lyons, a poor woman of about fifty-five years of age, had been suffering from paralysis of the right side from April, 1862, which prevented her from walking unaided by crutches. Her great faith impelled her to wash, on Sunday, the 2d of July, in the bath of the water of Lourdes, on leaving which she found she was healed. The writer of this book saw her, and spoke with her, a few moments after the extraordinary cure Poor woman ! She smiled and wept for consolation, exclaiming from the very depths of her heart :—“Thanks be to you,

O Holy Virgin of Lourdes! . . . It is not my prayers that have cured me ; it is the Most Holy Virgin has restored me to health ; she alone has rendered me capable of walking before her."

On her return to Lyons, she ascended with the pilgrims to the sanctuary of Our Lady of Fourviere, without using her crutches. She no longer felt any of the pains that had previously so much harrassed her.

On the 4th of July following, a certain Magdalene Lancereau of Poitiers, was also cured in the same extraordinary manner ; so also were many others restored to health ;— but we omit to mention them, as the ecclesiastical authority has not yet examined the facts. In fine the concourse of pilgrims to Lourdes, from all parts of the world, is ever increasing. In the space of one month (from the 30th of August to the 30th of September last) fifty thousand Communions have been made, and six thousand Masses celebrated. The Immaculate Virgin responds to so much love with still more numerous prodigies. In twelve days, say the *Annals of Lourdes* of the 30th September last, we have counted here seven wonderful cures. Doubtless, the Angels have proclaimed a thousand spiritual resurrections. The Immaculate Conception of Lourdes triumphs indeed, as the Holy Father, Pius IX., says in his address accompanying his presentation of the golden palm, with which we are happy to bring our book to a close.

Mons. Laurence, Bishop of Tarbes, although having, by his pastoral of the 18th of January, 1862, decided that the apparitions of the Grotto were true and supernatural, and having approved of the worship of the Immaculate Virgin of Lourdes, still said—" We humbly submit our judgment to the judgment of the Sovereign Pontiff, who is charged with the government of the universal Church." Well then, the Sovereign Pontiff not only did not disapprove of the decision of the Bishop of Tarbes, but even

approved of it—if not formally and solemnly, certainly, in many ways, implicitly and clearly, as we have already stated in these pages. Finally, he wished to attach, as it were, his seal to these his approbations by sending as a gift to the Immaculate Virgin of Lourdes a magnificent, precious palm of massive gold, weighing about five pounds, adorned with enamels and precious stones, and surmounted by the tiara and the keys of St. Peter with the Papal arms. It is composed of two branches,—the Martyr's and the Confessor's palm united together by a gold garland bearing the inscription :

Piae Maioricenses Pio IX.

Martyri et Confessori.

Having heard in the month of August last that a second Italian pilgrimage to Lourdes was being organized, the Holy Father consigned the palm to Cavalier Tolli, president and organiser of the pilgrimage, in order that he might place it in the hands of Mons. Folicaldi, Archbishop of Amata, and Canon of St. Peter's on the Vatican, director of said pilgrimage, whose duty it would be to have it laid upon the altar at the feet of Our Lady of Lourdes. When making this consignment, the Sovereign Pontiff made use of these words : *Here is this palm : It is the symbol of victory. Remember then to present it to Mary, because she is triumphant in all adversities.*

Happy of its charge, the second Italian pilgrimage presented it through the hands of Mons. Jourdan, now Bishop of Tarbes, upon the high altar of the Basilica of Lourdes, at the feet of the statue of Mary Immaculate, which was crowned upon the 3d of last September, in presence of an immense multitude who had assembled to celebrate the solemn festival.

What a sublime thought ! To Mary Immaculate is due the palm—the symbol of victory—because she is triumphant in all adversities !!! “To give expression to the senti-

ments of the great Pius IX.," said Mons. Folicaldi, when offering the palm to Immaculate Mary of Lourdes, "it would be necessary to have the gift of language which God has communicated in so eminent a degree to the Sovereign Pontiff.

"To Mary is due the palm, because from the very first instant of her Immaculate Conception, she has triumphed over the infernal serpent. To Mary is due the palm, because she is that peerless woman promised by God from the beginning of the world; because she is the Star of Jacob; because all generations have called her blessed; because she has been the companion of Jesus throughout the different stages of His dolerous Passion, and amid all His triumphs. Mary has been victorious in all the adversities of the Church; hers is the palm of triumph. . . .

"Cast then, O Mary, one look of pity upon the devotion and the love of Pius IX.; upon his meekness under tribulations: * * * Console our Sovereign Pontiff; console the universal Church. Have pity on our dear country, Italy, from which the gift of faith, its most precious treasure, would fain be taken away. * * * Hasten the hour of triumph, you who at the marriage feast of Cana hastened the hour for the public manifestation of the power of your Divine Son. With confidence, therefore, do we place at your most sacred feet the palm of victory. Pius IX., your devoted son, and our Supreme Pastor, sends it to you, because you are victorious over all adversities."

Yes, conclude we, to the Immaculate Mary of Lourdes is due the palm, because she has triumphed over all the oppositions, uncertainties and the malice of man.

Therefore, long live the Madonna of Lourdes, who has been victorious over all adversities.

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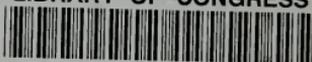
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